Summary

Grant Ward was the last person Skye expected to see within the Framework. And she didn't expect to find out that he was actually alive within the simulation, his consciousness trapped inside the programming. Now she has to find a way to save the team and shut down the Framework without destroying Grant in the process. But some things are better left up to a sacrifice.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Skye sputtered and coughed as she suddenly found herself almost underwater. She grasped for some kind of surface and pulled herself up, finding that she was in a tub. A tub? She blinked to readjust to her surroundings, her head still spinning from being uploaded into the Framework.

A shrill ring sounded out from next to her and she blindly reached for its source, finding that her hand had come into contact with a phone. She brought it to where she could see the screen and saw that there was a message on the screen:

‘Wake up your boyfriend. We’re being called in.’

Skye’s heart skipped a few beats, “Lincoln?” she asked quietly, placing the phone aside and slipping out of the tub. She reached for a robe that hung from a hook on the wall and put it on and then picked the phone back up, reading the message once again. Lincoln was actually alive in this world?

She brushed her wet hair out of her face and paused as she found that it was long, just like how it had been over two years ago. Choosing to ignore this fact for the time being, Skye slipped out of the bathroom, phone in hand. She stopped as she got just a few steps inside of a fairly large bedroom.

Her eyes trailed to the bed, finding that it was occupied by a man. She could see a bare arm over the cover and the hint of a bare back. Wait, she paused for a minute, that bicep looked familiar and it tugged at certain strings in her heart, but she wasn’t quite sure. Her head was still spinning from the residual effects of being uploaded into the Framework, she still needed to get her bearing.

“This is all strange.” she thought, slowly approaching the bed. “What kind of world is this exactly?”

She got to the side of the bed and stopped, staring at the back of the man lying under the covers. Heavily muscular with the faint traces of scars crisscrossing all over his skin… Skye held her breath as her eyes trailed to the back of the man’s head. The man had a head full of thick, black hair, not dirty blonde hair.

“That’s not Lincoln…” Skye muttered to herself, slowly backing away from the bed. There was no way that it could be him, could it? He was long dead, why would he be here? Wait, this was a fake reality, she remembered. Anything could be possible, so that’s how. But she still refused to believe it.

She backed up until she ran into a dresser, something falling over with a crash as a result. Turning around, she found that what seemed to be a photo frame had fallen over. She reached for it and picked it up, turning it around so she could see the photo that it held. Her stomach froze over and she brought her hand to her mouth, trying to stifle a cry. Right in her hand was a photo of her and Grant Ward of all people, his hand over her shoulder and their hands intertwined with one another, bright
smiles on their faces.

Her eyes flickered over to the bed, fully realizing that the man fast asleep in it was Grant. **“What the hell?”** She stared at the photo, refusing to believe it.

‘*Wake up your boyfriend. We’re being called in.*’

The contents of the text hit her like a train. In whatever world this was, Grant Ward was her boyfriend. They were dating by some strange twist of events. Something pulled at her heart and tears started building up in her eyes. Why was she feeling like this? None of this was real and she was supposed to hate him for everything that he did to her and the team. But there was still something pulling at her heartstrings as she continued to stare at the photo in her hand.

So was this the perfect reality that was made for her? A reality where Grant had never betrayed them and they had finally gotten what they had always wanted? Love? Skye absentmindedly touched the now-long locks of her hair with her hand that held her phone. She had always wondered what it would’ve been like if they had gotten together. There had always been that regret. That they had never been able to be a thing. That she hadn’t realized sooner just how troubled and broken Grant was.

Maybe if things had of worked out a different way, they wouldn’t be in this current situation. Grant wouldn’t be dead, the remnants of his body floating in the cold vacuum of space. And the team wouldn’t be all trapped in some hellscape of an alternate reality.

Skye’s mouth grew dry as she still stared at the photo. Hadn’t this been what she had always wanted? There had always been that place in her heart that a part of Grant remained in. She had tried to distract herself from the pain that he had left her in, and even Lincoln hadn’t been able to fix that, even though she had loved the man. And Grant had always wanted Skye as well but neither were able to have each other. And then things had been destroyed in the end.

All that was left now was this digital dream.

Skye continued to stare at the photograph, tears still in her eyes, until a shuffling sound came behind her and someone spoke out.

“Skye? What are you doing by the dresser?”

Her heart lurched at the sound of that warm and husky voice. She quickly placed the photo down and turned around to see Grant sleepily sitting up in the bed and staring at her. Her breath hitched in her chest as Grant frowned, obviously noticing the tears in her eyes.

He cocked his head as he wiped at his right eye, “Why’re you crying?” he asked. “Normally, I would think that you had a bad dream, but it looks like you already had a shower. Is everything okay, sweetheart?”

Skye just looked at him, unsure of what to say. Her eyes continued to trail his body. His messy hair stuck up in random tufts and a heavy stubble covered the bottom half of his face. Of course in this world he was still an exercise freak, he was still impossibly built.

“Skye?” Grant asked again, not moving from his spot. “Are you okay?”

She blinked and shook her head robotically, deciding that it would be best to just go along with this Grant. He was just a simulation afterall, right? “Yeah.” she croaked, waving a dismissive hand. “I’m okay. It was just a bad dream, nothing to worry about.”
Grant frowned and turned to slip on his underwear. He stood up and came around the bed to stand in front of Skye, “You wanna talk about it?” he asked, reaching out and placing a caring hand on her shoulder. He narrowed his eyes as he felt her flinch.

“No, I’ll be fine, just give me a little bit.” She quickly showed him the phone to try and move the subject onto something else for the time being. “Anyways, we got a message.”

He took the phone from her and turned the screen on to read the message. He rolled his eyes and tossed the phone on the bed, “Honestly, Trip can be so blunt sometimes.” he stated, shaking his head. “Go ahead and get dressed, I’ll go take a shower. Guess I won’t cook a big breakfast today after all. Shit.” He started towards the bathroom.

Skye’s heart skipped another beat. Wait, Trip? Trip was alive here too? She licked her lips, “Wait, what’re you going to do?” she asked, her voice cracking.

Grant stopped and frowned, crossing his arms over his bare chest as he turned to look at her, “I’m going to take a shower?” He took a breath, “Skye, are you sure that you’re okay? I mean, you’re not sick, are you?” he asked. “You’re not acting like yourself at all. You seem… Confused. Do you just want me to call Trip and say that you’re sick? I think you may need to rest.”

She shook her head, “No, I’m fine. I swear.” she tried to convince him, not really doing too well of a job. Her mind was still just too frazzled from everything for her to make a lick of sense. And Grant was far too smart to fall in line with her lies. “Just… Just go ahead and take a shower. I’ll get dressed.”

“Okay then.” he stated, narrowing his eyes. “But I can call you in sick if you want to. We really haven’t had a break in a while because of Hydra, but I imagine it’ll be okay to call in sick.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“Alright,” Grant said, raising his hands in mock defeat. “I’ll take your word for it.” He turned and went into the bathroom, leaving Skye to herself.

At this point, Skye’s head was completely swimming. She tried to lay out thoughts in her head. One, Grant was alive and they were dating. Two, Trip was alive. Three, they were fighting Hydra, so that meant that Grant was SHIELD. Maybe this was meant to be a perfect dream world, but something else was telling her that there was a harsh and sinister truth hiding behind all of this, and she really hated to figure out just what that was. This world was created by Radcliffe after all, and it was also fueled by the Darkhold. That had to mean something.

Skye turned her attention to the bedroom, taking notes of its details. Overall, it seemed really nice. She assumed that this was some kind of an apartment. So her and Grant had their own apartment in this universe, that really messed with her. Her eyes trailed its contents, seeing every little thing. It was all just so strange to her and she truly couldn’t even begin to wrap her head around it all.

But she was getting too far ahead of herself. She and Simmons came here to rescue the others, and she didn’t even know where Simmons had ended up. She could be hundreds of miles away from here and Skye wouldn’t even be able to contact her. Was she with SHIELD here? Skye wasn’t sure.

Everything was just so upside-down.

Meanwhile, Grant had just come out of the bathroom, towel hung around his waist. He stopped just outside the door and began to watch Skye with an unsettled feeling. He knew that something was wrong with her, but he just couldn’t put his finger on it. She looked around the room like everything
was new to her, like she was confused. He had even seen that same look in her eyes when she had turned around to look at him when he had woken up a few minutes before.

Like she had seen a ghost.

Grant’s stomach dropped and he started to put the pieces together in his head. There was a reason to why she was so confused and upset. It was because all of this was foreign to her, she had no idea to where she was or what was going on.

She wasn’t the same Skye he had fallen asleep beside the night before.

He swallowed the lump in his throat and stepped forward, knowing just what was going on, “Skye, “he began, trying to get her attention. “You’re real, aren’t you?”

Skye froze up and turned around to face him, seeing urgency and worry etched upon his face, “What?” she asked incredulously. “What’re you talking about?”

“You know just what I mean.” he answered, taking another step towards him. “You’re real, you just came here, didn’t you? You’re not the Skye this world gave me.”

Skye’s face fell and she honestly had no idea to what was going on, “What the hell are you talking about?”

“You’re from the outside world. The real world.”

“Wait, how?”

“You’re not supposed to be here like this.”

Chapter End Notes

So I decided to go ahead and post the first chapter of this as Feed the Machine and Always You and I are winding down. And here’s a few quick notes with this. Grant IS alive in here. It's just his consciousness somehow, which I'll explain later on. He IS SHIELD and SHIELD's a small organization that fights the Hydra regime in this world. The other details will be explained later on. Please leave a kudos or comment! I'd like to know what you think about this!
This Gravity Lies

Chapter Summary

Grant starts to explain the lie that is the Framework world.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You’re not supposed to be here like this.”

Skye blinked and took a step back, “What?” she asked again, giving him a confused look. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

Grant swallowed and licked his lips, heading over to the bed and sitting down on the edge. He tugged at his towel, “I already said it. You’re from the outside world.” He pointed up, “You’re not from this fucked-up place at all. And you know it.”

Her face fell, unsure of how Grant would know that she had just gotten into the Framework simulation. Wasn’t he supposed to be a simulation himself, just a part of the programming? But for some reason, he seemed to be self-aware. Perhaps it was just a flaw in the Framework’s code, but something seemed very, very off.

“Look, I know that you’re confused and very scared, I don’t blame you. Especially since you’re around me.” Grant continued, taking Skye’s silence as an answer. “But I do need you to talk to me, Skye. I need an answer. Are you real? Are you the real Skye and not the simulation one?”

“You know that this is a simulation?” Skye asked, a croak in her voice. She wadded up a part of her robe in her hands, “How the hell is that possible?” she asked. “You’re a part of it, you’re….” She trailed off and her face fell as realization dawned on her. She almost felt sick as she realized the truth, only because she refused to believe it.

Grant wasn’t a part of the Framework simulation, he was in it. He was just like herself and the rest of the team, they had been uploaded into the Framework. But Grant had died over a year ago, so there was no way that Radcliffe had been able to upload his mind into the simulation, was there? And how the hell was he so aware? Something was wrong, really wrong.

He nodded at her to keep going, seeing that she was coming to the point he was trying address.

“You’re still alive.”

Grant sighed and nodded, rising to his feet, “I am.” he stated simply. “Don’t ask me how, because I have no idea.” He walked over to the dresser, pushing past Skye. “All I know is that I’ve been in this world for God knows how long and I can’t get out.” He stopped at the dresser and turned around to face Skye again, a darkened expression on his face, “How’d you get here? If you came here, then that means there must have to be a way out.”

Skye licked her dried lips, unsure of what to say. She couldn’t believe that Grant Ward of all people was still alive, well for the most part. As far as she could understand, it was just his consciousness somehow. His body didn’t exist anymore. But she still counted that as him being alive. But did that
mean he was the same man that went on that insane revenge path that seemed like forever ago?

She shook her head, “It’s like a virtual reality program.” she began to explain, pointing to her head. “There’s this thing you put on your head and it pretty much uploads you into the system, taking the form of whatever ‘avatar’ was designed for you. I can be disconnected at anytime by SHIELD agents on the other end.”

Grant’s face fell, “Then that means I can’t get out because I wasn’t ‘uploaded’ like that and I don’t have a real body. Whatever happened to me made me a part of this damned world. I’m just the only one aware to all of its bullshit.” It almost looked like he was on the verge of tears, which was a really strange sight for Skye, “I don’t know how long I’ve been in here. It seems like years, only because I don’t know how things started. I have memories of this world’s life and memories of my old life. I don’t know where they end and where they begin.”

Skye swallowed, “The Framework’s only been up for a couple of months.”

“A couple of months? That doesn’t seem right.” Grant ran his hands through his wet hair and anger shown on his face, “I don’t understand, it seems like I’ve been here my entire life. But I know it’s not real, I remember my true life.” He looked back to her, “Then why the hell are you here?” he asked coldly. “Why would you come here willingly if you had the choice to stay in the real world? Why would you come to this hell?”

Hell? Why would Grant think this world to be a hell? Wasn’t the Framework supposed to be some kind of perfect dream world for each of its inhabitants? Skye had a bad feeling that something was really wrong here if Grant thought it was a hell, and he was the one truly aware of the lie. She decided not to question it, though, afraid that it may provoke him. If she had learned anything from knowing him, she knew that it was best not to anger him.

“I’m here on a mission, Ward.” she stated firmly. “I came here because there are others trapped here as well, even if they don’t know it.”

Grant’s head perked up, “Others?” he asked. “There are others in here as well, not just what this world created?”

“The rest of the team. Radcliffe, that guy that was with Hive, put them in here after he created androids of them.” Skye explained carefully, seeing that Grant was confused. “Me and Jemma came here to free them.” Jemma. Skye’s stomach fell as she realized that she had no idea to where Simmons had ended up. There was no telling to where she had appeared in the Framework.

“Simmons?” Grant asked with a frown. “She’s… She’s dead in this world. Died a few months before Hydra took everything over. I don’t know what happened though, mainly because there never was a team here.”

Skye almost threw up. Simmons? Dead? What did that mean for her now since she had gone into the simulation as well? Things were really starting to look bad. “No team?”

Grant shook his head, “As far as I know, this universe’s Coulson was never a SHIELD agent.” he answered. “And good riddance, too.” he added under his breath. “So that means the team never formed. And that there was no one to combat Hydra, so they rose up and took SHIELD’s place.”

Skye remained silence, a sickenexpression on her face.

“Look,” Grant said, leaning against the dresser, his eyes on the photo of him and her. Oh, what such a sweet lie that had been. The only good thing that had came out of this hell, but now it was ruined.
The real Skye was in his Skye’s place and that meant that relationship was gone. Dead and gone. “There’s way too much to explain. Get dressed and I’ll call Trip. I’ll tell him that you’ve got the flu or something and you’re too sick to come in.”

“I… I’m not,”

“It’s best that you know everything I know before you go out there, Skye.” Grant stated coldly, rising to his full height. “You don’t want to be caught off guard out there. I’d rather have you hear the truth from me than face it out there and get hurt because of it.”

“And how will I know if you’re telling the truth or not?” Skye asked defensively as Grant came back around the bed and picked up his clothes from a pile on the floor. “I have no reason to trust you, you know.”

She frowned as Grant let out a small laugh. He stopped and turned to look at her with a grim smile, “Yes, that’s correct. You have no reason to trust me at all, but there is no way that I could construct a lie as elaborate as this world. Everything I say will be the truth in this world. And you have to believe me, whether you like it or not.” He took his clothes and went into the bathroom so Skye couldn’t see him, but she could still hear him. “Unfortunately, you have to make allies out of anyone you can, and that falls on me. This world is a lie I have to live, so I’m your source of information here.” He came back out, fully dressed, “I’ll call you in sick so we can talk more. There’s obviously a lot you want to ask me and I have a few things I’d like to ask you as well. So we need the time.” He nodded back towards the dresser, “Your clothes are in there.”

And with that, Grant grabbed the phone off of the bed and stalked out of the room, leaving Skye to herself. And, honestly, Skye’s head was completely swimming at this point. Thoughts swarmed in her head as she turned to head towards the dresser and fish some clothes out of it. At least they were her clothes.

She had several new ‘facts’ in her head now. One, Grant was indeed alive and his consciousness was somehow stuck inside of this virtual reality. Two, he was fully aware of the world’s lies. Three, Simmons was dead here somehow and she had no idea to where the biochemist could be. Four, the team didn’t exist and Coulson didn’t work for SHIELD. And five, Hydra ruled this world.

So this wasn’t some perfect mirror image world like Radcliffe had intended. Everything seemed to be cracked and upside-down, and Skye was truly afraid to learn what Grant had to say. Truly, the only thing had made a lick of sense was that her and Grant were together here and that he was SHIELD, something that could’ve truly happened if things had got slightly different in the real world.

She made quick work of getting dressed, finding a simple button-up and a pair of jeans. She slipped those and a pair of boots on and tied her wet hair back, not bothering to even try to dry it. Truly, that wasn’t something that really mattered right now. She was way too focus on trying to figure out just what the hell was going on in this world. Hopefully what Grant said would help her figure out to where the rest of the team was; that was still her main goal here.

But could she really trust him, though? He was still the backstabbing liar that had betrayed them over three years ago. He could just be manipulating her into getting what he wants, which seemed to be freedom from this world. But there was a small part of Skye that believed that there was something different about the man, that he posed no threat. There was obviously a much bigger threat in this world other than the fact that Grant Ward was alive.

Something still felt off, though. Why had this world create a world in which they were together? Of all things to be, why had that one thing happened? Skye knew that she truly needed to figure out just what was going on here and the first step to getting there was to get Grant to tell her everything that
he knew. He obviously had a lot to say and she wanted to know it all. If they had to stay side-by-side in this world, Skye knew that it was best to wring every little detail that she could out of him. It wouldn’t hurt to use him a little bit, it’s not like he did the same to her and the team.

And it was clear that Grant had differing intentions here. It seemed as though he wanted nothing but the best for her, she just got that vibe from her for some reason. Then again, by the way he had explained things, it seemed as though half of him believed that they were still in a relationship. There were two sets of memories fighting for dominance within Grant’s head and it was making him suffer. That’s why he wanted out. He just wanted to escape the pain and the lie that was this world.

Maybe he was just another variable in her mission, that he was just another soul for her and Simmons to save, well if she could find Simmons first. Skye needed answers, and she really hoped that Grant held them all.

Taking a breath, Skye left the bedroom and went down a short hallway until she found herself in a small living room. The room wasn’t much, there was a couch and a few chairs, all surrounding a big TV that hung on the wall. Skye’s breath hitched as she found yet another photo of her and Grant. Both were all smiles and had their arms intertwined. And was that a dog between them? Skye found herself staring at what seemed to be a black German shepherd in the photo. Of course they had a dog, that really wasn’t surprising.

“Ward?” she called out, trying to figure out where he had gone.

“I’m in the kitchen. Shouldn’t be hard to find.”

Skye sighed and scanned the room until she spotted an open door that seemed as though it led to a kitchen. And she swore that she smelled food. She went across the living room and headed through the door, finding Grant standing over a stove.

“Are you cooking?” Skye asked incredulously as he turned around. “At a time like this?”

He shrugged, flipping a pancake over in the frying pan that he held, “I haven’t eaten and I figured that you were hungry. I guess that we can talk over breakfast.” he stated, turning back to the stove.

Skye nodded to herself, “Was that a dog in that photo in there?”

Grant turned back around, a smile on his face, “Oh, yeah, that’s Max. We, uh, I have a dog here. He’s outside right now. He slept on the balcony last night because he threw up, didn’t want him doing in it the house. He usually sleeps beside the bed.” he explained, stepping away from the stove after putting a pancake on a plate. “Can you watch this for a moment? I need to let him in.”

Skye found herself saying yes and watched as Grant headed out of the kitchen. After a few seconds, she heard a door open and a dog bark.

“Hey there, boy!” Grant yelled. “You can come back in.”

The scampering of paws against hardwood rang out and a big, black dog suddenly burst into the kitchen. Skye’s eyes widened as the dog jumped up on her, giving her a loud bark. “Ah, uh, hey there.” she cooed, petting his head so he would get down.

“Max! You do that every time. I don’t see why, because she lives here!” Grant yelled, coming back into the kitchen. He stopped and feigned a smile at Skye, “Sorry, he’s just really excited to, uh, see you. That’s all. He always does this.” He went back to the stove and resumed cooking as the dog laid down on the floor with a huff. “You can sit down if you want, I’m almost done. And I called Trip, we can stay here. The Director’s just gonna have to find two other agents. We’ve got a lot to
“More like you have a hell of a lot to explain, Ward.” Skye stated coldly, sitting down at the small table. “I want to know just what the fuck is going on here.”

He chuckled, “I figured that you would.” He sighed and flipped the last pancake, turning off the stove. He took a plate of pancakes and bacon, sitting it in front of Skye. “I’ll tell you whatever you want, as long as I’m able to.” He took his own plate and sat down in front of her. “Where do you want to begin?”

Skye narrowed her eyes and frowned at him, turning her gaze to the plate of food. She really wasn’t sure of what she wanted to ask, only because there was just so much she was going to ask him. But there was one thing itching at the back of her mind:

“Okay, just how the hell are you alive and what’s the deal with us?” She motioned around herself with her hands, signifying the house and them.

“How the hell did this come to be?”
The pancakes went untouched as Skye began to ask Grant an insane amount of questions about the Framework and how he was here. She truly wanted to know every little detail that he could possibly tell her. Only because she figured that she needed to know everything about this world so that she could figure out a way to save the team from it.

But her first questions were about Grant himself, mainly since she was so shocked that he was alive within the virtual world.

“Skye, like I said earlier, I have no idea how the hell I got here. I remember dying and a few various flashes of things from when Hive inhabited my body, but the rest of my memories are intertwined with those of this world.” Grant explained, staring down as his untouched plate of pancakes. “I don’t even know when I got here. But by the way you explain it, I’ve only been here for about two months.” He sighed and ran his hands through his hair, “But it feels like my entire life. Whatever this universe is, it constructed an entire life for me. One that’s far from the true one that I lived.”

Skye licked her lips, her eyes trailing down to Max on the floor, whom of which was now sleeping, “How so?” she asked, feeling like she already knew the answer.

“I’m not Hydra in this world.” Grant’s face scrunched up in thought, “If I’m sorting out my memories just right, I’ve always been SHIELD. Garrett never existed in my life here. It was SHIELD who recruited me straight out of juvie and I’ve been with them ever since.”

Skye remembered that the Framework was supposed to play off of a person’s biggest regrets and tried to ‘fix’ them. So if this part of the reality had been tailored to suit Grant, that mean that following Garrett and becoming Hydra were two of his biggest regrets. But that really wasn’t all that surprising. Skye froze for a second, they were together in this world, so did that mean that she was one of his biggest regrets as well? That thought pulled at her heart.

Grant pointed to her, “I met you about three years ago, Framework time. You were still brought into SHIELD here. But you had actually been arrested by a few level sevens, which included me.” He shrugged, “So not that much different from the real world. But you stayed because some of the higher-ups offered you a job and you had nowhere else to go, I don’t think that it had anything to do with your family. I can’t quite remember the details about that.”

She blinked, confusion setting in. The Framework version of her didn’t join SHIELD in order to find her family? So did that mean she never needed to find them? And was she even Inhuman here? “Wait,” she spoke up. “Am I still Inhuman here?”

He nodded, “You are. Guess that’s something that you can’t change about yourself.” he stated, looking at the still-sleeping Max. “But for some reason, you already had your powers when SHIELD
took you in, I don’t remember how. They knew you could be an asset and, believe it or not, they put you with me. Thought that I could sort things out with the unruly Inhuman hacker.” A brief smile ghosted across his face, “We soon fell for one another and after a couple of months we were dating, much to the higher-ups’ horror.” He sighed, “But things soon turned for the worst a few months later, when Hydra rose up.”

“I take it that SHIELD didn’t beat them down.”

“Nope. SHIELD was soon decimated and Hydra took over, establishing a regime of sorts. They had themselves woven so deep into the American government that they had taken over the country in a matter of a couple of months. That soon bled over into the major ally countries. And within a year and a half, a new world order was soon established.” He spread his hands out in front of him, “And now you have the world of today.”

Skye was utterly terrified, “Hydra rules the entire world?”

“Basically. There are a few major countries that refuse Hydra rule, but I’m sure that they’ll fall soon. It’s hard to keep fighting when the majority of the world is against you. And it’s not like this is a good world at all.”

“What do you mean?”

“You ever read the book 1984?” Grant asked, pushing aside his now-cold plate of pancakes. “This world is basically like living underneath Big Brother, but Big Brother happens to be Hydra. They watch everything and they’re everywhere. Any hint of rebellion against them and you’re dead.”

Skye raised an eyebrow, “Yet you stand against them.”

“We… We were a few of the first SHIELD agents to gather back up in a resistance-like force after The Fall.” He scratched at his ear, “SHIELD was reestablished as an underground agency to try and defeat the Hydra regime to restore the world back to what it originally was. A world without Big Brother. But Hydra’s stronger. They have better weaponry, better troops. Any gifted that they don’t kill falls under their brainwashing techniques.”

Her stomach dropped. Any gifted that they didn’t kill? “Wait, what about gifteds?” she asked, fear seeping into her voice. “What does Hydra do with them?”

Grant’s throat grew dry and he swallowed, “Gifteds, Inhumans, anything of the sort…. They’re all illegal here. All either to be controlled or eradicated, even you.” he stated, his voice devoid of any emotion. “Those who are different live in fear of being killed, imprisoned, or brainwashed. Some live in hiding, a lot have joined resistance organizations such as SHIELD. SHIELD manages to protect most from Hydra, but that protection is starting to fail. More and more are getting killed each day. It’s only a matter of time before the Inhuman gene is completely wiped from this world. It’s flat-out genocide. They spin-up this anti-Inhuman hate rhetoric and spread it across the globe, causing more and more people to turn against them, even as the number of Inhumans continue to grow.”

Now, Skye felt as though she was going to throw up. She really needed to get the others out of this fucked-up world before it was too late. There was a strong possibility of her being killed here just because she was Inhuman. And being killed in the Framework meant that she would die in real life as well. So she needed to be really, really careful in how she did things.

“But you’re immune to that shit, right?” she asked him carefully. “Please tell me you are.”

Grant chuckled slightly and shook his head, “Of course I am, I fell in love with you after all.”
stated simply. “Inhumans aren’t bad, but I do understand where the fear comes from though. You all have these differing powers, basically allowing you to do almost anything. Some may use that as a weapon, to get their way. There are bad Inhumans, but not all of them are bad.” He pointed at her once again, “You’re one of the good ones, both in this world and the real one.”

Skye slightly blushed and looked away, unsure of what to say. She figured that it would be best to just keep asking him more questions about this world and himself. “And how did you figure out that all of this was fake?” she asked, her voice a mere croak.

He shrugged, “One day, everything just fell apart. I started to see the cracks in everything, and no matter how much I tried to cover them up, the memories kept bleeding through. I didn’t want to remember my real life, I just wanted to remember what I have here. Even though this world is horrible, I had created my own perfect little corner of it with you. I was happy. We were thinking of leaving SHIELD behind to try and protect ourselves, but that’s when I began to see the cracks.” Sadness shone in his eyes, “I refused to believe reality. I didn’t want to remember the monster I had become. I didn’t want to remember all that I had lost because of how much I fucked up. I just wanted to stay with you and pretend that all of it didn’t exist.

But it’s hard to ignore those memories, especially when they’re fighting with another set of memories inside of my head.” he continued, pointing to his head. “I almost always have a headache and I sometimes hallucinate things.” He looked down to the table, pressing his hands against his thighs, “I’m suffering inside of a world I cannot get out of. And I think the only way out is death, but I don’t want to die again.”

Remorse for Grant slowly started to churn deep Skye’s chest. She knew that she was supposed to hate him, but she couldn’t help but to feel pity for him. This man suffered so much that he couldn’t even get peace in death. Something always brought him back in order for him to suffer more. And she wasn’t quite sure of what to say to him that wouldn’t set him off or make him even more upset.

“Maybe… Maybe I can find a way out for you.” The words came out of her mouth before she could stop them. Her heart skipped a couple of beats as Grant looked up to her with both hope and yearning shining in his eyes. Had she really meant what she had said? Could she find him a way out?

“And how do you plan on doing that?” he asked, his voice turning cold. “I know that you have no idea on how to rescue the others. So how do you plan on getting me out when I don’t have a body. I’m just a part of this fucking simulation now. Once it’s gone, I’m gone.”

Skye’s face fell, “I-I’m not sure.” she stammered, her eyes drifting back to Max, whom of which was now awake and looking up at the both of them. “But maybe we can find a way while trying to find the others.”

“Let me help you.” Grant blurted out, looking her straight in the eyes. “I… I mean, it’s the least I can do. If I’m truly stuck here, let me at least help get them out. I’m not that bad guy anymore, Skye. I-I want to prove just that. I may not like them, but that doesn’t mean i want them to suffer here as well. And again, you need someone with you that knows about this world.”

Skye stared at him for a good, solid minute. Honestly, she could really use the help and she had no one else to turn to here since she had no idea to where Simmons was at. But it still was Grant Ward of all people, could she really trust him to help her and not turn on her at the last minute? Even still, she did need the help and really had no one else to turn to. If she had to rely on Grant Ward for help, so be it.

“Fine.” she stated firmly, crossing her arms. “But how do I know that I can trust you?”
“I know that it may be hard to do so, but you can trust me. I’ve spent long enough with you in this world, I have no reason to betray you again. I don’t want to see you hurt again, Skye. You can trust me on that.” Grant practically pleaded with her. “And maybe this will all lead for a way out for me, I don’t know.”

She wanted to believe him, but there was a part of her that thought that he was only offering his help so he could get out himself. That he really didn’t care about the wellbeing of the others, he just wanted to end his own suffering. But, then again, she had no one else to turn to. So she had to rely on him, no matter if he truly wanted to help the others or not. Help was help.

“I’ll believe it when I see it.” Skye stated, standing to her feet. Her sudden movement caused Max to jump up and bark. She turned and smiled at the dog, whom of which seemed to be one of the only good things in this world. “You can help, but I’ll ditch your ass if you show any signs of trying to play me. I can find someone else to help.”

Grant nodded and looked back down to the table, “You have my word, Skye.” he stated softly. “I won’t try to play you. I just want to help.”

“I hope so.” she muttered, turning her back to him. “But first things first, we need to find Simmons. I don’t believe that she’s dead, so she has to be somewhere. Hopefully she wouldn’t be all that hard to find, if Hydra doesn’t get to her first.

We won’t be able to find the others without her.”

Chapter End Notes

So hopefully this provides enough background for the Framework world of this fic and the problems that Grant is going through. I will say that Grant's issues here will prove to be a bigger problem further into this story, so make a guess or two on what will happen with that. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Saw the Crack in the Walls

Chapter Summary

Grant's issues in the Framework show themselves.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“What do you plan on doing?” Grant turned from his place at the sink after several minutes of silence. “It seems like you just threw yourself into this world without a solid plan.”

Skye looked up from where she sat at the table, a laptop in front of her. She had been researching this world. And, honestly, everything made her head spin. Hydra controlled everything in this world, there wasn’t a single thing left untouched by them. “I… Like I said, Simmons needs to be found before anything else.” she began. “I can’t go on without her. But if you’re talking about after Simmons is found, I’m not entirely sure.

The rest of the team needs to be found and then they need to somehow remember who they really are. Once that happens, we try to find a way out of here.” she continued, her eyes drifting back to the computer. “I don’t know how long all of this will take, though.”

Grant nodded and turned to stare back at the soapy water in the sink, not saying a word. “Can I really trust that she’ll help get me out of here?” he thought. “She may just be saying that to get my help. I’ve got to remember that she isn’t this world’s Skye. She doesn’t love me. Hell, she probably still hates my guts and she’s just forcing herself to work with me. I guess in a world that you don’t know, you really have to be willing to ally yourself with anyone. Even old enemies.”

He took a breath and kept his eyes on the sink, “And how do you plan on getting them to remember who they really are?” he asked. “If anything, they’re like how I was before I started to see the cracks. They firmly believe that this world is the true one and that their lives here are the ones they’ve always lived. It’ll be hard to break them out of that mold. Especially with the Framework working against you. There’s no telling what would happen.”

“Then why was it so easy for you to break out of it?”

“It wasn’t. Guess you didn’t hear the part about my headaches and hallucinations, did you? Of course not.” Grant sighed and placed a dish away in the drainer, “I think I’m not supposed to be here. Whatever made me a part of this world probably just forced me into it. Maybe the programming surrounding my existence is starting to break down, I just don’t know.

It wasn’t easy for me to break out. I…” He trailed off and shook his head with a low and dark laugh. “Breaking out fucked me over. Like I said earlier, realizing the truth made there be two sets of memories in my head. My real self wants to remember the truth, but the version this world created wants to hold onto the lie. It’s painful. I suffer every day because of it. Headaches. Hallucinations. Nightmares. All of that just because I can’t fully grasp reality. No, I never broke out. So don’t look to me for an answer.”

Skye reached out and closed her laptop. “Sorry, I didn’t,”
“Don’t. Don’t blame yourself for anything here.” Grant bit his lip as a sharp pain shot through his head. “You haven’t done anything wrong in this world, so there’s nothing to blame yourself for.” He looked at her and he wished in that moment that Skye was still the one that this world had given him. But he knew that all good things had to come to an end sooner or later. That lie was over. “You’re not this world’s Skye."

“Then we’ll find some way to dismantle this world and get you out alongside everyone else.” she stated, rising to her feet. “There has to be some way to get everyone out.” She turned and grabbing her laptop, causing Max to jump to his feet, “I need to do some more work.”

Grant watched quietly as Skye left the kitchen and headed into the living room. He groaned and sat back down in the chair, gripping the sides of his head as he could feel another splitting headache coming. And that usually meant some kind of bad hallucination or a flashback, and he always hated to find out just what they entailed.

He lowered his head towards his knees and squeezed his eyes shut to block out the lights of the kitchen. He moaned again as everything went static and something started to roar in his ears:

“Grant?”

Grant smiled and looked over to Skye, whom of which laid next to him in the bed, “Yeah?” he asked, reaching out and pulling her closer to his bare chest. “What is it?”

“I think we should get married one day.”

Grant blinked and spluttered, looking down at Skye, “You’d really want to do that?” he questioned. “I mean, now’s probably not the best time to do so with Hydra and everything at our doorstep.”

Skye laughed and poked at his chest, “Not now, silly.” she replied. “When everything’s calmed down somewhat. I know that Hydra won’t be taken down anytime soon, so it’s not really that great of an idea to wait until then. Maybe when there’s a somewhat calm period, we take that chance and we tie the knot. What do you say?”

“Well, I’m not against it.” Grant stated, kissing the top of her head. “Maybe we should wait a few months and see what the world’s like. It’s not possible for it to get any worse than it is now. Hopefully we can get an opportunity soon enough.”

“Sounds like a plan to me.”

“Yes, I”-

Everything blurred away as Grant felt something cold and wet press up against his hand. He blinked, the world around him coming back into focus. Straightening up, his eyes drifted down to see Max looking up at him. “Hey, boy.” Grant croaked, reaching out to weakly stroke the top of the shepherd’s head. Max always knew when Grant felt horrible, shame that he was just a construct of the Framework’s programming.

The dog barked and licked Grant’s hand, trying his best to make the man feel better. Grant couldn’t help when the hallucinations came. Well, that had been more of a vivid flashback more than anything else, his Framework memories trying to take over. But why had it been that particular one?

They were going to eventually get married, but they never had gotten around to it. And now that dream was gone. Even though Grant had known then (that had only been a few weeks ago in Framework time) that that Skye was only a construct of the Framework, he wanted to live that lie. At least it had been something good. And he would’ve lived that lie if given the chance. But now that
the real Skye was here, that chance was long gone.

He groaned and slowly got up from the chair, Max staying close to his leg as he stumbled his way to the cabinet. Grant really needed to get rid of his headache before Skye came up with some kind of plan. And, truly, he really didn’t feel like fooling with her right now, he just wanted some rest. But in order to get to bed, he had to go through the living room. And that meant Skye seeing him like this.

He knew that he looked absolutely miserable and he really didn’t want Skye seeing him this way. In all honestly, he didn’t want to appear weak to her. He didn’t want to show that he was practically breaking down. He still wanted to help her, only because of the guilt from his past life that had slowly been eating at him. Grant Ward wasn’t that monster anymore.

“Hopefully helping her will help me get out as well. I can’t stay here much longer.” he thought, dry-swallowing two aspirin and heading back to the sink. “I know I’m breaking down. There has to be something wrong with me. I’m afraid that I’ll die if I keep on living here. Maybe it’s the Framework rejecting me. I know that I’m not supposed to be here.” He splashed some water on his face and dried off with a hand towel, heading towards the kitchen door. “Maybe the program is trying to fight me like I’m some kind of computer virus. And it’ll probably get its way one day, that’s why I need to get the hell out of here before that can happen. I’m not going to die again.”

He paused in the doorframe, seeing Skye sitting on the couch with her eyes on her laptop screen. “But she’s just one person. It’s just us, possibly Simmons too if we can find her, against an entire simulation. And even if we can find the others, how do we break them out of it?” He watched her quietly, not sure if he should try to talk to her more or not. He had to constantly remind himself that she wasn’t the one that this world had given him. “And if we get that far, how do I get out? The others can just be disconnected, I’m a part of the programming. And if I can’t get out and the Framework is destroyed, I’ll be destroyed alongside it.

I’m not going to die again. I won’t let that happen. Never again.”

Chapter End Notes

So this was pretty much a peek at what Grant goes through in the Framework world, only because I didn’t know what else to write. And I do have a serious question. Do you y’all want me to keep this going? I feel like this didn’t have much reception with the last two chapters. I just want to make sure that y’all still want to read this before I write too much. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
I Don't Want Your Perfect Life

Chapter Summary

Skye figures out the first person to save.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

(The Next Morning)

“Skye, you know that we can’t keep calling in sick forever.”

Skye looked up from her laptop to see Grant standing in front of her with his arms crossed over his broad chest. She frowned and shook her head, “I'm not ready to see anyone yet.” she began, leaning back in the couch. “I need a little more time.”

“Time isn’t something we have here.” Grant stated coldly, sitting in the chair across from the couch. “If we keep avoiding going to SHIELD, someone will come sooner or later to check on us. Knowing Trip, he’ll be the one to do so. Morse or Hunter really aren’t the caring types.”

“Morse and Hunter? They’re here too? Of course they’re still SHIELD here. At least they’re not trying to kill Grant this time around.” Skye swallowed and looked down towards the floor, “Just give me until tomorrow to sort things out. That should give me plenty of time to figure out where the others are and for me to get my bearings.”

Grant looked up to the ceiling and ran his hands through his hair. He was afraid for what would happen now that the real Skye was in this world. The Framework version had everything down to a fine point. Now he would have to teach this Skye how to hide from Hydra. One sign of her being Inhuman and Hydra would swoop out of nowhere to imprison her for it. God, he hated hiding.

“Have you even gained any traction with that yet?” he asked, trying to get himself to think about something else. He knew where only two of them were, but he wanted to see what she had found. “I mean, it can’t be all that hard to find some of them.”

“I’ve only located Coulson and Fitz so far. Apparently Coulson’s a teacher at a school nearby the Hydra-led Triskelion.” Skye began, looking back to her laptop screen. “Fitz is some big tech billionaire. Almost Tony Stark’s level.” She looked back towards Grant, “I don’t know about the others. You don’t happen to know something, do you?”

Grant nodded slightly, “I knew about Fitz, but that’s only because he’s a big name in the tech industry. His name’s everywhere these days. But I also know where May is at, believe it or not.” he answered, causing Skye to raise an eyebrow. “She’s a high-ranking Hydra official. Big enemy of the SHIELD cause. I know that’s a little hard to believe, but it’s the truth. I don’t know what caused that to happen here.”

Skye blinked, trying to let that fact soak in. May was Hydra? But that didn’t seem right. How did May’s biggest regret being changed lead to her being a Hydra agent? Something was wrong here or either something else led to that. Skye wanted to know just what that was. Everything was just so
Then… Then she’ll be hard to get to.” Skye said, trying to steady herself. “I know that she’s been in this world the longest, but she may have to be the last one that we get to. It’ll be easier to get to her if we have more people with us. Especially if Coulson’s with us. That’ll make things easier.”

“Yeah, if Coulson doesn’t try to kill me first. He’ll lose his shit once he realizes that I’m alive in this world.” Grant thought, giving Skye an automatic nod. “If it were up to me, I’d just leave him here to rot. I don’t give a shit about his sorry ass. I don’t take too kindly to people who crushed my chest and left me to have an alien parasite take over my dead body.

But I can’t do that to Skye. If I’m to find a way out of this world, I need to do whatever she says. And if that means I have to rescue people that I hate, then so be it. Guess I need to be willing to make sacrifices here.”

“He may be the first we can get to. Especially since I don’t know where Mack, Mace, or Simmons are.” Skye stated, closing her laptop and pushing it away. “We’ll have to start with him.”

Grant sat up, “Mace? As in Jeffery Mace?” he asked, voice full of disbelief. “He’s trapped in here too?”

Skye frowned and looked back towards Grant, “Uh, yeah? You happen to know him?”

“He’s the leader of SHIELD here.” Grant began. “He was one of the first Inhumans to rise up against Hydra. He took the reins of SHIELD just a few months ago.”

“He’s SHIELD’s Director in the real world as well, but he’s not Inhuman. It’s a long story, but he’s still Director. Well, more like he’s just the face of SHIELD, Coulson still makes all of the rules.”

Skye couldn’t believe that there was actually at least one person that they could get to with ease. And she knew that it wouldn’t be hard to remind Mace of the truth.

“Inhuman? Then that was probably one of his regrets. That he lied about being Inhuman to the public. Guess he’s really powered here. At least we can easily get to him. Mace would probably be the best person to get to first. It wouldn’t hurt to have someone else that’s powered before we head off to try and find the others.” Skye thought, turning her gaze away from Grant. “That gives us an advantage.”

Grant studied Skye and realized that she was coming up with some kind of plan. He straightened back up, “You’re wanting to go after him first now, aren’t you?” he asked. “I can tell that’s what you’re thinking.”

“Well, he’s probably the easiest to get to at this point and it wouldn’t hurt to have him when we go for the others.” Skye answered, standing to her feet. “It’ll definitely help.”

“Yeah, he wouldn’t be all that hard to get to at all.” Grant agreed, standing to his feet as well. “I mean, he’s usually the one that debriefs us on most of our missions. So we’re really close to him here. I imagine once we do go back, which probably needs to be tomorrow, we’ll be sent on a mission. You can try to get to him then.”

“It’s a good start, but we can’t waste time on this. We need to try and rescue the others as fast as possible here. We can’t keep them waiting.”

Grant frowned and a cold feeling settled into the pit of his stomach as he watched Skye walk out of the living room and into the bedroom. “I don’t have forever either. I don’t know how much longer I have.” he thought, heading out towards the balcony and getting Max to follow him. He leaned up
against railing once he got outside.

“I feel so selfish about doing this because it’s probably the only way to save myself, but I have no other choice. I’ll die here sooner or later. I know that my memory issues are only the beginning, but I’m fading. I don’t know how much longer I have here. I’m not supposed to exist here, that much I know.”

Grant sighed and looked down towards Max, whom of which was looking up at him with bright brown eyes. He forced a smile and leaned down to pet the top of the shepherd’s head. “All of this will be gone sooner or later, no matter if I’m dead or not. If I’m dead, it’s all gone. If I make it out alive, it’s all gone. It really doesn’t matter what I do because my perfect dream will be gone. Even if this is a nightmare world, it was still perfect for me in some ways. Now it’s all falling away. Guess I’ll never be able to get what I want. I don’t deserve a perfect life anyways.”

He looked up towards the cloudy sky, detecting the scent of rain on the air. He knew that everything was breaking down around him. He knew that there was a slim chance that he would make it out of here alive. He’d probably be dead before Skye got everyone back anyways. So why try anyways? Why try when he knew that he’d more than likely get nothing out of it in the end?

Maybe it was just because he felt like he at least owed them all something after everything that he did. Maybe it was just because he didn’t want anyone else to suffer within this world as well. He wasn’t sure of anything anymore. There was just one thing he knew though. This world needed to be destroyed somehow, but he needed a way out first. He wasn’t going to die again.

“This isn’t a perfect life for anyone. And it’ll all burn once we’re done with it.”

Chapter End Notes

So Mace is the first one they’ll get to. So hopefully that’ll go well. And Grant knows that he’ll die if he doesn’t get out of the Framework soon, so it’s really a race against time now. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
I'll Feed the Lies You Made

Chapter Summary

Skye and Grant finally go back to SHIELD.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Morning)

“Skye, I assure you that you’ll be perfectly fine.” Grant said as he maneuvered the car around a pothole. He hated that SHIELD’s base was off of a long and beat-up road in the middle of nowhere, but at least it kept it hidden. “Just go with what everyone’s doing, that shouldn’t arouse suspicions. At least we’re with the good guys and not Hydra.”

“But everything’s so different here,” Skye began to protest, her eyes watching the passing trees. “I don’t know how to act around everyone else. I don’t want to seem strange or anything.”

“I’m pretty sure that everyone acts just like how they did in the real world. Trip’s still his happy-go-lucky self. Hunter’s still a dick. And Morse’s still a force to be reckoned with. And to be honest, Hunter and Morse still hate me here, but you have to work with what you’re given.” He explained, pulling into a heavily tree-covered area. “They’re the only ones from the real world that are still SHIELD here. Everyone else is somewhere else.”

“Well, hopefully getting through to Mace will be easy. ‘Cause breaking him through will making getting to everyone else a hell lot easier.” Skye stated with a huff, seeing that Grant had pulled into a large, yet hidden, parking garage of sorts. “And it needs to happen soon.”

“Mace isn’t that hard to talk to, it’s not like you need fifty different security clearances to get to him. All you have to do is go to his office. Now, getting him when he’s to himself is a whole other story though.”

“Good, at least it seems that Mace doesn’t have those stupid clearance levels here. Guess no one has time for clearance when the whole world is against you.” Skye thought, getting out of the car as Grant did the same. “We get him when he’s alone and we somehow break through to his true self. I just don’t know how to do that, though. But it can’t be all that hard to remind him of the truth.”

Grant fell into line next to Skye, “Again, just go along with everyone else.” he stated lowly. “We need to act like nothing ever changed.” He stopped and turned to look at her, “That means we need to act like we’re still dating. I know that’s probably not an idea that you’re too fond of, but we have to act like what the Framework thinks us to be.”

Skye’s face paled in color. Yes, it was true that she wasn’t too fond of the idea, but Grant did have a point. They needed to act like nothing ever changed with them. And if that meant they had to feign a relationship, then so be it. Being in a relationship with Grant wasn’t at the top of Skye’s list right now, but it is what it is. Even though there was a part of her that wished that this was how it had been in the real world. But everything surrounding them had been ruined.
“Uh, yeah, sure.”

“Look, it’s not like we need to do anything too drastic, okay?” Grant continued, resuming his pace towards a door on the far end of the garage. “Maybe hold hands here and there. Maybe a peck on the cheek every now and then. Just enough to make it believable. I don’t want to overdo it. Especially since you’re not the Skye that likes me.”

Skye noticed how Grant fell silent after that statement as she followed him. She truly didn’t realize just how much Grant had enjoyed his life in the Framework up until when he started to see the cracks in everything. Despite just how messed up the reality of this world was, Grant still had a perfect life all to himself. He was a good guy who lived with the version of her that absolutely loved him. He had a dog that seemed perfect in every aspect. Truly, Grant was mourning what he had lost in this world. Soon it would all be gone, and there would be no way to get it back.

She stopped just as Grant reached a door that had a keypad. She saw the weariness that had settled into Grant’s features as he punched in a series of numbers to unlock the door. Grant had said that he was suffering because of the memories inside of his head. But she knew that there had to be something else bothering him. His memory issues couldn’t be the only problem plaguing him. But she knew that Grant wasn’t the type to open up to anyone, even her. He would bury his problems until they killed him. And little did she know, that was pretty much the case here.

Grant stood to the side and pulled the now-unlocked door open to allow Skye to go in first. He raised an eyebrow at her as he adjusted his suit tie, noting her sudden apprehension, “Go on in. It’s not like anyone’s gonna bite here. It’s not Hydra.”

Narrowing her eyes at the man, she walked through the open door into a dimly-lit hallway. Grant followed suit and shut the door behind him, she sound of a lock turning and a loud beep followed.


“It’s a secret SHIELD base, Skye.” Grant stated with a roll of his eye. “They were like this in the real world, too. Okay, maybe not this dark and damp, but we’re on a tight budget. All money goes to places other than building renovation.”

“Whatever. They could at least use an air freshener.” Skye mumbled, wrinkling her nose at the musty smell of mildew. “What do we do now?”

Grant looked at his watch as he led Skye down the hallway towards a more brightly-lit corridor, “Our briefing isn’t for another thirty minutes, so we’ll just head to the common room. If we’re lucky, Trip’ll be there and we can talk to him for a while. And, usually, he’s there chatting it up with a few other agents. I imagine Trip will want to check on you after your ‘flu’.”

Skye frowned, “Not funny.” she almost snapped. Honestly, she was actually worried about meeting the Framework version of Trip. What was she supposed to say to a guy that had been dead for over two years in the real world? Grant had said just to go along with what everyone else was doing, so Skye assumed she needed to do just that with Framework Trip as well.

“Huh, Framework you really appreciated by brand of humor.” Grant commented with a small smirk as he led her into a room akin to the common room back at the Playground. Well, what was left of the Playground now.

“Well, I’m not her. You never really had much of a sense of humor anyways.” Skye said with a wrinkle of her nose. “I,”
“Hey, Skye! Glad to see that you’re feeling better!”

Skye blinked and looked up to see Trip, well Framework Trip, heading towards her with a big, beaming smile on his face. Her heart skipped a couple of beats and she remembered Grant’s statement of going with what everyone was doing.

“Uh, yeah, I am. Thanks.” Skye stated, scratching the back of her head. She could’ve sworn that she had seen the faintest of smiles flicker across Grant’s face in the corner of her vision. “It must’ve been one of those 24 hour things, you know?” She feigned a convincing smile, “Hell, I didn’t even want to get out of bed the other day. Grant had to pull me out of it.”

Trip’s smile grew and his gaze shifted towards Grant, “Well, knowing him, you got the best care possible.” he stated. “Ward probably never even left your side. Well, considering he does that on a normal day, but still.”

“Yeah, he did.” Skye stated sheepishly, trying to decide just how to keep this conversation going. “He really waited on me hand and foot.”

“Man, does she have you whipped.” Trip stated with a laugh, clapping Grant on the shoulder. “Anyways, I’ve got to do something for Hunter. Never agree to help the man out with anything. I’ll see you later.”

Grant blinked and nodded, giving Trip a small smile, “Yeah, we’ll see you later. And don’t let Hunter boss you around too much, you’re better than that.”

“I know!” Trip’s laughter carried throughout the common room as he left the two to themselves.

Grant turned to Skye, the slightest of smiles on his fact, “Now, that wasn’t too bad, was it?” he asked. “Keep up like that and you’ll be fine.”

Skye grimaced, “At least it was just Trip. He was just like the real one.” she stated. “It’s no different than two years ago.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about anyone in SHIELD, Skye. You just have to worry about trying to get the others to remember the truth.” Grant continued, leading her to a couch and motioning for her to sit down. “You’ll be fine, trust me. You really have to worry about keeping your powers under control, though. One slip-up and you’re in Hydra custody. One slip-up and everything’s ruined.” His face darkened, knowing of his own fate if Skye couldn’t pull through and do what she came here with Simmons to do.

“And then everything goes to utter shit.”

Chapter End Notes

And even in the Framework, Trip’s a big ray of sunshine. At least Skye and Grant are at SHIELD now, so their next task is to try to get to Mace and remind him of the truth. Shouldn’t be that hard, right? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Bound to These Broken Memories

Chapter Summary

Things prove to be not all sunshine and rainbows for Skye and Grant.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

(Sometime Later)

“I can’t believe that Mace chose today of all days to be out on business.”

Grant gently bit his lip as he led Skye into a small comms room, where of which he and Skye were assigned to be reading over recovered Hydra documents for the rest of the day. “Everything can’t be easy, Skye.” he began. He walked over to the small table in the middle of the room and placed down the thick file that he had been holding in his hands. “He’ll be back tomorrow, I’m sure that we can spare just one day considering that time move a hell of a lot faster here than in does in the real world.”

“Yeah,” Skye sighed and sat down at the table right as Grant sat down. “But he was supposed to be the easiest to get to, and he ends up being out of the office. That just throws a wrench in everything that we planned out.”

“It’s not like we had a solid plan anyways.” Grant thought, reaching for the file. “We’re going into this blinder than a newborn puppy. I hate it. I like plans. I like everything to be laid out in front of me so I know what will happen. This isn’t a plan, it’s a rash decision that could get us killed. You don’t even know how to get to the others.”

“Again, I’m sure that he’ll be back either later today or tomorrow, we can approach him then.” Grant stated, opening the file and grabbing the first paper off of the stack. “In the meantime, since we really can’t do anything else until we do have Mace, we’ll do what we were assigned to do.” He pointed to the file and handed Skye a pen.

“What the hell am I supposed to do with this?” she deadpanned, looking at the pen.

“We read through the documents that SHIELD recovered from Hydra and we mark anything suspicious that we see in them. Which probably won’t be a whole lot since we do this every week. There might me something new concerning their policies against Inhumans or how they patrol certain areas. We mark them and pass them off to higher-ups.” Grant explained. “Shouldn’t take more than a few hours.”

“And how do you think I’m going to do this?” Skye asked coldly. “I know nothing about how Hydra works in this world, so I’m not going to notice anything new in the documents. Everything’s going to look new to me.”

Grant clenched his fist and suppressed a groan, “Look, if you see anything suspicious, just mark it. The higher-ups will be able to know more than we do.” he snapped, trying not to let his anger rise.

Another side-effect of the Framework issues was that his anger tried to get the best of him from time to time.
Skye blinked, “Alright fine, but don’t be surprised if the entire document is circled.” she muttered, grabbing a document off of the pile. “Besides, I thought you were a specialist. What happened to field missions?”

He looked over to her, a darkened expression on his face, “There’s not a lot of field missions these days. It’s hard to do so when the entire world is the enemy.” he stated coldly. “I mean, there are recon missions and such. But we don’t do a whole lot of fighting anymore. It’s hard to.”

“Must be hard for you when you’re the Terminator and all. Don’t you thrive off of violence or something?”

“No.”

Skye shook her head and looked down to the document, her eyes scanning the contents, “Or are you like Neo now? Considering this is the fucking Matrix and all.” she continued. “I mean,”

“Is this a fucking game to your or something?” Grant cut in with a growl, standing to his feet. “Do you think this is all a joke?”

“What?” Skye asked codly, looking up at Grant with a frown. “Just a little joke to lighten the mood here, Ward. Just because I’m stuck here doesn’t mean I can’t joke around some.”

Grant glowered at her, “You need to take this seriously, Skye.” he hissed, pointing a finger at her. “You can’t joke around at all here. Are you going to crack a joke when Hydra finally finds out that you’re Inhuman and comes to arrest you? Are you going to joke when you’re either executed or imprisoned for the rest of your life?” He watched as Skye’s face paled in color, “Good, that’s what I thought.”

He turned away from her, “Just because this is a simulation doesn’t mean that you don’t have to take it seriously. Everything here is an honest to God threat. You have to believe that everything is real because it all can still hurt you. This isn’t some video game where you go back to the last checkpoint if you die. Did you say that if you die in this world, you die in the real one?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Then my point stands strong here.” Grant continued, crossing his arms. “You have to take this seriously, Skye. If you don’t, you’ll end up dead or imprisoned.”

“I am taking this seriously, Ward. I’m just not all uptight like you are. I can afford to crack a joke from time to time. Get that stick out of your ass.” Skye growled, turning her attention back to the document on the table. “You’re still an asshole in this world, too.”

A muscle twitched in Grant’s face as he went to sit back down. But not before something tore at his heart. Of course it hurt to hear Skye talk like that towards him. It reminded him that she wasn’t the one that this world had given him. He kept forgetting that the real Skye hated him. He just wanted the Framework version back. Truly, he was starting to regret telling her that he would help. Maybe he should’ve just refused and tried to bury himself back into the lie that the Framework had created until he was erased from the world. But how could he do that when his Skye had been ripped from it?

It all reminded him that he couldn’t have anything worthwhile.

He didn’t deserve any of it.

Grant sighed and turned his attention away from her. He figured that if he absorbed himself in his
work, he would forget about everything that was happening for a little while. It usually worked most of the time. It helped to tear him from the reality where he was slowly being destroyed by the Framework programming and that it was all driving him mad as a result. It didn’t help that the Skye from the real world was here. He so desperately wanted her to love him again, but he knew that wouldn’t happen.

Some things were just too much to ask for.

He slowly let the contents of the documents fill his mind as he thoroughly read them and marked anything new that he saw. But he soon could feel the static building up in the back of his mind as a result of the current stress. He really didn’t need another hallucination right now, especially since he was right next to Skye. He didn’t want her to see him like that. But there were some things that just couldn’t be helped.

Grant groaned and gripped at his head as everything went black:

“Agent Ward?”

Grant looked up as Commander Hill approached him and he straightened up, “Hill? What’s going on?” he asked, his mouth growing dry. It usually wasn’t a good sign when the Deputy Director showed up. “Is something wrong?”

Hill shook her head with a sigh. Leave it to Grant to immediately overthink things. “No, nothing’s wrong, but I want you to come meet someone.”

“Meet someone?” Grant asked, standing to his feet and following Hill as she turned and motioned him to follow. “Who?”

“Your new rookie.”

Grant’s stomach dropped, “Rookie? I’m going to be someone’s SO?” He blinked, “Who is it?”

“Remember that gifted hacker you brought in a few days ago?” Hill questioned, leading him down a hallway.

“Yeah. Wasn’t her name Skye or something?”

“Yes, and she’s your new rookie.”

Grant stopped immediately in his tracks, “Wait, she’s not qualified to be an agent, Hill.” he began. “One, she didn’t even go to the Academy. Two, we picked her up out of a van; she was a suspect. Three,” He stopped as Hill held up a finger.

“She can be an asset, Agent Ward. Yes, a risky one, but an asset none less. Her powers are a force to be reckoned with. And her computer skills are something that we can use.” Hill stopped right outside of a conference room. “She may be a little unruly, but I think that you can fix that. You’re a good agent, Ward. Time to see if you can be a good teacher as well.”

Grant blinked as everything came back into focus and the static cleared from his mind. Oh, how his heart ached. That had been the day Skye had been assigned to him as his rookie; the true start to everything that had been good in this world. He looked over to Skye, whom of which was looking down at her own documents, Good, she hadn’t noticed it.

“I don’t know how long I have.” Grant thought, looking back down to the document. “We both need to get our shit together if we hope to get everyone out of here alive. We can’t keep fighting like this.
It’s going to cost us sooner or later.

And we can’t afford to lose anything.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait, but I've been pretty sick the past couple of days. But, unfortunately, I'm back with angst. Of course there's going to be tension between the two, it's just a matter of if they can learn to trust one another before it's too late. (I should probably tag this as slow burn now.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Wake Up, Wake Up and Kill the Machine

Chapter Summary

Skye and Grant try to break through to Mace.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Day)

“Are you sure that you saw him, Ward?”

Grant stopped and turned to look at Skye, “Yes, I’m sure. I saw him walking down the hallway earlier this morning right after we got here,” he answered. “So I’m pretty sure that he’s still in there. He wouldn’t leave right after just getting back. So you should be able to talk to him now if you want. It’s better to go ahead and try to break through to him now.”

Skye frowned, “Look, I don’t even know how to break through to him.” she stated firmly, crossing her arms. “I truly don’t know Mace all that well, so I don’t know what I could say to break through to him.”

“I guess just try to think of something from the real world that would really impact him or something.” Grant turned back to face the remainder of the hallway. “Something that would make him realize that everything here is one, big lie. And hopefully that will work.”

Skye bit her lip, trying to figure out just what that one thing could possibly be. She knew that it had to be something that wasn’t true in this world, maybe something that this world fixed. It seemed as though in this world, Mace was really an Inhuman. So Skye figured that maybe if she tried to remind him of the facade he had built in the real world and that he really wasn’t an Inhuman. She really hoped that something like that would work. She didn’t want to appear crazy in front of Mace at all.

Grant noticed Skye’s worry and confusion as they began to walk down the hallway. He stopped once again and turned to place a caring hand on her shoulder, “Skye, you’re smart, I know that you can come up with some kind of solution.” he said quietly, a small smile on his face. “I’m sure that anything you end up doing with work in the end. And, truly, we’ve got to be willing to try just about anything.”

She looked away and huffed, “Well, hopefully I can do something here, because you’re completely useless here.” she stated firmly. “You’re of no help.”

Now, Grant wasn’t sure to take that as an insult or what. Yes, he wasn’t able to directly help to break Mace through, but Grant was certain that Skye meant that in a harsh way. She still hated him and she always would; she was just forcing herself to work with him in order to get everyone else out. A small part of Grant believed that she wouldn’t help him in the end. That she would just take everyone else and leave him here to die. It’s not like he didn’t deserve it anyways.

“I... Of course I won’t be able to do anything here.” Grant snapped back, turning back around and beginning to lead her down the hallway once more. “I don’t know the real Mace at all, so I have no
idea of how to break through to him. I may be able to help with the others, but not him. So this is all up to you.” He pulled at his jacket as he led Skye closer to the office. He could feel another headache building, and he really didn’t need that now. Especially if that meant another vivid flashback.

He rubbed at his temples as they approached the closed door. “Here’s his office. I’d recommend going in like you just have a question about an upcoming mission, just so you don’t appear suspicious to anyone else.” he began, looking back at her. “Once you’re sure that it’s only going to be us and Mace in there, that’s when you hit him with whatever will break through to him. I’m leaving this all up to you. Let’s just say that I’m here to cheer you on.”

Skye raised an eyebrow, trying not to notice the weakened look in Grant’s eyes, “Didn’t know that you were the cheerleader type, Ward.” she teased. “Maybe we can put you in a skirt, give you a couple of pom-poms, and,” She trailed off as Grant’s expression grew cold and hard.

“We don’t have time for this shit, Skye.” he hissed, facing the door and raising his hand to knock. “What did I say about playing games?”

“Well, I remember saying something about needing to joke from time to time. We can’t always be serious. Just trying to lighten the mood again.”

“It’s not working.” Grant held his breath and rapped lightly on the metal door. “You need to find something else to do.”

A few seconds of silence passed before they heard Mace’s voice echo from within the room.

“Come in.”

Grant nodded slightly before going to open the door, allowing Skye to go in first. Mace stood to his feet as he saw the two agents come into the room.

“Ward. Skye. What can I do for you?” he asked, giving them both a curt nod.

Skye gulped, casting a quick glance over towards Grant, whom of which had his attention solely focused onto Mace. She assumed that Grant didn’t want to act like there was something going on between them. And she also guessed that it was okay to go ahead and hit Mace hard since they were the only ones in the office. And it was clear that she was alone in this; she couldn’t rely on Grant here. But she had already figured something out that should work.

“We wanted to ask you something about that recon mission with that Hydra base that’s coming up in a few days.” Skye began. “We did a little digging on the facility ourselves already and a few things came up that we wanted to see if you were aware of them or not.”

Mace blinked, “Like what?” he asked. “What requires coming directly to me about?”

“We found that Hydra is working on some kind of project at that facility. We’ve asked around about it, but no one has seemed to pick up on it yet. So, we were wondering if you’ve heard anything about it from any of the other bases.”

“What’s it’s name? A lot of intel files through here, so I tend to lose track of some things.” Mace answered, pointing at Skye. “But I might know something.”

“It’s called Project Patriot.”

Mace frowned as something suddenly flickered in the depths of his mind. Something from somewhere else, but he couldn’t quite place his finger on it. Something about that name seemed
oddly familiar to him, but he didn’t know why. “I… I think I’ve heard of it from somewhere.” he began slowly. “But I’m not quite sure. I can look into it for you. What have you found out about it?”

“Why do I know that name?” he thought, keeping his gaze focused on the two agents. “I don’t recall that being in any Hydra intel. But it’s familiar and I don’t know why. I’m not sure of what it is, but I have definitely heard about it.”

Skye stifled a smile as she realized that something was getting through to Mace. She just needed to keep on going with what she remember about the project that had given him his ‘powers’ in the real world. She didn’t remember much, only that some kind of serum gave him his strength.

“All we can tell so far is that it’s some kind of experiment or something that involves some kind of serum injection.” Skye answered, casting another nervous glance towards Grant. “It gives the subject or whatnot temporary strength.”

Mace frowned even more as something else pulled at his mind. Things were suddenly not making sense to him and something just felt really wrong. Why would Skye be questioning him about something like this? “Ah, why would Hydra be creating a project that gives a person temporary abilities?” he asked. “They’re mowing Inhumans down left and right, why would they try to create something akin to them?”

Skye shrugged, “I don’t know. Maybe they want something that they can control. A power that they can take away at the drop of the hat.” she continued lightly. “Can’t exactly do that with Inhumans. They want to make some kind of statement, perhaps. Create some kind of symbol for themselves.”

“Symbol? What… What is she going on about? None of that seems like Hydra at all. It’s like she’s directing all of this towards me.” Mace blinked and nodded slowly. “Come to think of it, those two have been acting strange lately. Did something happen to them on their last mission that we don’t know of? Did Hydra brainwash them. No, they wouldn’t be asking me such bizarre questions like this. There’s something else that they want.”

“Agent Skye, I don’t question your or Agent Ward’s competency as agents, but I feel like something else is going on here. You seem to know an awful lot about something you’re asking me about.” Mace stated, rising to his feet. “Are you two okay? Is there something going on that I should know about? I don’t want something to be wrong with two of my best agents. SHIELD can’t afford to lose anyone these days.”

Skye bit her lip and decided that she pretty much needed to go on the offensive and get a little harsher with Mace. It seemed as though at least something was breaking through, so it shouldn’t take much. “Look, Director, we just want to know if you know anything about something called Project Patriot. Especially when it does center around you.”

“Skye,” Grant warned, trying to get her to stop.

Mace frowned even more, “Skye, are you okay?” he asked coolly. “You’re not making any sense whatsoever here. I don’t know anything about some kind of project.”

“You don’t remember the serum? The President making you the big face of SHIELD?” Skye questioned, stepping forward. “You trying to get the world to see that the Inhumans aren’t a threat, despite not being one yourself?”

“Agent Skye, I will not—”

“You don’t remember Radcliffe and his crazy robot? You don’t remember any of that?!”
Mace’s face twisted up as Skye’s words distorted. “What’s… What’s going on? I don’t understand. I don’t.”

“Mace, you’ve got to wake up and face the truth! This isn’t the real world! This is some kind of fucked-up reality that Radcliffe forced you into! None of this is real! You’ve got to remember who you really are!”

“I don’t,”

“Mace, please.” Skye tone was softer this time. “We need your help and we can’t do it if you’re still stuck in this reality. Wake up.”

Mace’s face softened and he blinked. He looked at her and frowned, slightly cocking his head in confusion.

“Daisy?”

Chapter End Notes

I’ve been sitting on this one for a few days, only because I’ve been pretty sick with a respiratory thing again. So this may not be the best, but it's what I could come up with. (And I assume that Skye knew about Project Patriot, I can't quite remember and I didn't have time to check.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
“Daisy?”

Mace stood to his feet and he looked around the room as confusion started to set in, “What are you doing here?” he asked, looking back to Skye. “Wait, what is this place?”

Skye blinked, casting a glance over to Grant before looking back to Mace, “What do you remember?” she questioned. “Not about here, but from the warehouse from before?”

“I…. I don’t know.” Mace shook his head as everything came up blank. “I just remember us getting separated and then everything goes blank.” His face scrunched up as he thought, “Then I’m here. So what happened?”

“Radcliffe had that Ivanov guy kidnap you, Fitz, May, and Coulson.” Skye began slowly, trying to explain this the best she could. “He replaced you with LMDs and uploaded your consciousness into the Framework. You’ve been in here for a few days.”

“A few days? No, that can’t be right. It feels like I’ve been here forever.”

“That’s how it works. You’re assimilated into a fabricated life and you gain its memoires, so it seems like you’ve always been here and you believe that this is the truth.” Grant explained, knowing that feeling firsthand. “But in reality, you’ve only been here a while and it’s one big lie.”

Mace frowned and looked towards Grant, “And how the hell do you know?” he asked, remembering who Grant really was. Of course Coulson had told him all about the menace and how he had died. And those memories were conflicting with those of the Framework where Grant was the loyal SHIELD agent. “Aren’t you supposed to be dead?”

Grant shrugged, “Funny how things work out.” he stated. “I’m stuck here, too. My consciousness was somehow uploaded into this world when it was created. I was the first one here.”

“Then how are you so aware?”

“I broke through all by myself. Let’s just say the cracks aren’t all that hard to see if you’re really not supposed to be here.” Grant’s face fell and he looked away. “You see through the bullshit if said bullshit is rejecting you.”

Mace looked back to Skye, knowing that he really didn’t want to know just what Grant was talking about, “Does that mean you were uploaded, too?” he asked, trying to move the subject away from what Grant had been talking about.”
“Ah, not quite.” Skye began, lightly shaking her head. “Simmons and I, we were uploaded by
SHIELD to try to rescue you all. So we can be disconnected at any time.”

“So where’s Simmons?”

“We… We don’t know. I’m assuming she took the place of her avatar, but according to Grant, she’s
been dead here for a couple of years.” Skye answered sadly. “So I don’t know what that means for
her. Hopefully she’s still out there somewhere, we just don’t know where to even begin looking.”

Mace slowly nodded his head in acknowledgement, unsure of what to say in response. “So I assume
you’ve found at least one of the others?”

“No, you’re the first we’ve got to. The others are a little harder to get to than you were. We just
figured that it would be much better to go ahead and get to you first. We need the entirety of
SHIELD on our side anyways.”

“Yeah, that does sound like a solid plan.” Mace agreed. “Do you even know where the others are?”

Grant shook his head. “We know that Coulson’s a teacher at a school near the Hydra-infested
Triskellion. May’s some kind of Hydra agent. Fitz is a bigwig engineer or something. And Mack…
We haven’t found him yet.” he explained. “But we’re getting there.”

“Coulson sounds like he’s probably your next best bet.” Mace began, leaning up against his desk. “It
won’t be hard to get to him because there won’t be much security around him. Then probably Agent
Mackenzie. May will be much harder to get to because of how tight Hydra’s security is.”

“Then what about Fitz?”

“Sorry to break it to you, since it isn’t common knowledge. But, Fitz is a Hydra higher-up with direct
ties to their Director.” Mace explained lightly, watching the two agents’ faces fall in horror. “He’s in
charge of designing most of the tech that they produce. Unless you plan on leading a full-scale
assault on the Hydra headquarters, then you’re not getting to him.”

“F-Fitz is Hydra here?” Skye stammered in a horrified squeak. “H-How is that possible? That’s not
him at all.”

Mace shrugged, “There’s no telling to how that happened. Radcliffe and AIDA were the ones that
designed this upside-down world after all.” he stated. “But he won’t be easy to get to.”

Grant looked down to his shoes, truly unsure of what to say. “Fitz… That’s far from him. He needs
to get out of here soon.” His voice was tight and strained, like he was holding something back. Was
this how everyone felt when he had revealed himself to be Hydra all those years ago? No, this was
far from that. Grant knew that something in this programming was forcing Fitz to be the enemy. He
was just following his programming.

Grant’s shoulder’s slumped. No, he himself had been like that as well. He had only been following
the programming that Garrett had hammered into him. He had just taken it too far and had never
realized the insane path that he was on. But now, that gave him all the reason to try and get everyone
else out of here. He couldn’t let them practically become robots, even if he hated most of them.

“Then we’ll try our hardest to get to him. We can’t waste any time.” Skye stated coldly. “This world
needs to be destroyed.”

“Well,” Mace began with an another nod of his head. “I’m willing to do whatever to get everyone
the hell out of here. But we’re on our own more than likely. We can’t trust this world’s
programming to help us fight against it. Coulson and Mackenzie are the best to go after next. And, hopefully, we can find Simmons as well.”

Skye nodded, "I’ll go see if I can pinpoint Mack’s location and maybe we can go after Coulson later.” she answered, turning towards the door. “Come on, Grant.”

Grant nodded lightly as Skye opened the door and left the room, but he stopped as Mace’s voice rang out from behind him.

“Ward, are you alright?”

“What?” Grant stressed, turning around to face the man. “What do you mean?”

“You… You don’t look well.” Mace stated, noting Grant’s weakened complexion. “And you’re acting kind of strained.”

Grant waved a dismissive hand, “I’m fine.” he lied right through his teeth. “Just haven’t been sleeping well lately. I might head back to mine and Skye’s apartment in a few to rest. I need to check on our dog anyways, I left him with a neighbor and he doesn’t like for me to be gone long.”

He feigned a smile, hoping that Mace would believe him.

Mace nodded, despite wearing a frown, “Even though you aren’t quite the ideal ally here, we still need you.” he stated. “We don’t need something happening to you.”

“I assure you that I’m fine. It’s just been a weird couple of days. That’s all.”

“Alright, I’ll take your word for it. Go join Skye.”

Grant nodded back and turned to leave the room. “I can’t tell any of them that I’m not okay. This world is fighting me. I already have a headache and we haven’t hardly done anything today. I’m getting worse and worse by the day. I need to get out of here soon.

Or I’ll die before I can see this world burn.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for such the short chapter, I just couldn't figure out to write. But it still does a whole lot. Mace is truly broken through to and Skye and Grant learn that Fitz is a Hydra higher-up here (I'm going along with canon for that, but I'll more than likely leave the certain relationship out of it.). Keep the comments and kudos coming!
It's Eating at Me from the Inside

Chapter Summary

Grant has a bad day and someone new comes into the fold.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(A Couple of Hours Later)

Grant trudged back towards the apartment door with Max at his side. He had decided to leave the base a little early to get some peace and quiet from all the craziness that was going on. Even though he knew that it wasn’t the best timing for him to leave to take a few hours for himself, but Grant knew that he couldn’t handle anymore. His headache had been slowly growing for the past few hours and it had gotten to the point where his vision was starting to blur. All he wanted was some rest without Skye there to worry about whom they were going to try to find next.

He fumbled for his set of keys and almost dropped them as he pulled them out of his pocket. “Come on, come on.” he thought, sticking the keys inside of the lock and unlocking the door. “I managed to drive here well enough, and I was on my motorcycle. Now I can’t even get inside of the fucking apartment. Goes to show how much I’ve gone downhill.”

Grant walked through the open doorway, tugging at Max’s leash to tell the dog to follow him. He stopped right inside of the foyer and turned to close and lock the door. “Looks like it’s just you and me for a little while, boy.” Grant cooed, leaning down to unhook Max’s leash and placing it aside. “Skye’s busy right now, she’ll be back after a while.”

Max looked up at Grant with his big, brown eyes and barked, his tongue hanging out the side of his mouth. Grant managed a small, weak smile and ran a hand over the shepherd’s head. “Honestly, you’re the greatest thing in this world.” he turned and beckoned for the dog to follow him. “Don’t let Skye know that.”

“And it’s not like Max knows that Skye’s no longer the one he knows.” Grant thought, heading into the kitchen with Max on his heels. “He won’t. And he’ll be gone forever when this world is shut down. Maybe if I get out of here, I can settle down somewhere and try to find a dog like him. Maybe two. I’m tired of the violet life. Maybe I should just raise dogs for a living. That’s the dream.”

Grant fumbled in the cabinet for two aspirin and took them dry. He honestly didn’t feel like trying to get a glass of water; he felt like he could just pass out right in the middle of the kitchen floor. Slowly turning to face Max again, he let a small smile fill his face, “You wanna go take a nap, boy?” his voice barely coming out as a croak. He honestly didn’t know what on Earth was going on with him, but all he wanted was some sleep.

Max barked in response and Grant took that as a yes. Grant nodded and shuffled off to the bedroom, slipping off his shoes and clothes as he did so and throwing them in a pile when get got into the room. He took a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt off of the dresser and quickly slipped them on before practically falling into bed. Max hopped up onto the bed and made quick work to snuggle against Grant’s chest.
Grant smiled softly and draped an arm over Max’s body. He hated that the dog would be gone soon, but he was going to cherish every last moment he had with him. Truly, Max was the only good thing left in this world. Even the Skye he had had gone away.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with me.” Grant thought, threading his fingers through Max’s thick, black fur as he closed his eyes. “I shouldn’t be feeling like this in the middle of the afternoon. I never get like this. I must be fading faster. Maybe since Skye’s trying to fight against the Framework, it’s fighting against me even more. Guess that means that my time here has been cut short. If we can’t get to everyone else soon, I’ll be gone.

But why do I want to get out so badly? I know that I don’t want to die again, but there’s nothing left for me in the real world. My younger siblings hate me and I have no friends. Skye hates me. Is it even worth it to try to save myself? Maybe I should just let myself fade away. I don’t have anything left.”

Grant squeezed his eyes shut to try and stop his still-growing headache. Tears started to build-up as he buried his face into Max’s fur. And he didn’t even know to why he was crying. Was it from the pain? Or was he truly upset at the fact that he didn’t know what to do?

He wasn’t the type of guy to cry and Grant hated to do so. It made him feel weak; probably the same mentality that Garrett had driven into him all those years ago. Grant always tried to push away and compartmentalize his feelings because he never wanted them to show. And his tears now were just a sign of his breaking down. A sign that he would be no more sooner or later.

“And why did I even offer to help? I know that I don’t care for any of them. Maybe just Fitz; he does really need to get out of here. But everyone else has either hurt me or doesn’t care for me. Maybe I should just let them rot here. Not like it matters anyway, I’ll be dead soon enough.”

And Grant still didn’t know to why he had offered to help Skye get everyone else out. He figured that it was just the guilt of his betrayal still riding on his shoulders, the guilt of everything that he had destroyed. But none of this people had ever offered to help him when he had been suffering. They had left him to rot and slowly go insane. Why should he help them?

He knew that it was the right thing to do and it was the only way he could even possibly get out. But he still felt nothing for these people. Maybe it was possible that he could make it right with them and once he was out, he could be on his way with no questions asked. At least he could attain some kind of closure out of all of this.

“I just want my suffering to end, but can I even be happy? Even my happiness here was destroyed. Skye and I were supposed to lead a great life together. As long as that was to be, I didn’t care about Hydra. We were supposed to get married soon, find somewhere quiet to settle down, maybe have a kid or two. I wanted to be a father. I wanted to have a son.” Tears rolled down Grant’s face and he pulled Max closer, “Now it’s all gone and I’ll be dead again soon. I can never be happy. Happiness hates me.”

Grant continued to sob, his tears mixing into Max’s fur. The dog remained still, knowing that he didn’t need to bother his owner right now. Grant cried for a while until his sobs started to subside and sleep started to drag him down into quietness.

But he wasn’t going to get that today.

He bolted up as the doorbell rang, causing Max to shoot out of the bed and run into the living room. Grant rubbed at his tear-crusted eyes as Max’s barks rang all throughout the small apartment. “Max, please!” he yelled, slipping out of the bed and trudging towards the door. “You’re making my
headache worse!"

“And who the hell could that possibly be? Skye would just walk in, Mace doesn’t know where we live, and Trip would call first. It has to be someone else. Did I leave something of Max’s at the neighbor’s? Maybe that’s it.”

The doorbell rang again and Grant grimaced, “Alright, coming!” he almost snapped, annoyed that someone had interrupted his sleep. He reached Max and told the dog to heel as he reached for the doorknob. “You better have a good reason for all of this.”

Grant opened the door and his stomach dropped as he came face to face with the person on the other side of the door, whom of which seemed just as surprised to see him.

“Ward?”

“Simmons?”

Chapter End Notes

And I finally brought in Simmons! It's clear that she was obviously expecting Skye, but she didn't get that at all. So I promise you that the next chapter will be interesting. And, unfortunately, Simmons is gonna have to be a jerk for a while. But it's understandable. Keep the comments and kudos coming! (And let's just agree that Max is the greatest thing ever.)
The Only Thing Worse than a Traitor

Chapter Summary

Grant and Simmons share some harsh words.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Grant blinked as Simmons stumbled backwards with her hands raised, as though she was trying to defend herself from him. Of course she was still scared of him, even if she hadn’t realized this wasn’t a Framework construct. She would always be afraid of him.

With one quick and fluid motion, Grant reached forward and grabbed Simmons by the wrist and pulled her inside the apartment, only so no one could see the scene that was about to unfold. He quickly shut the door and locked it, turning around to see her staring in fear at him.

“Get your bloody hands off of me!” she screamed, stepping back and practically snarling at him. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“I, uh, live here.” Grant deadpanned, sticking his hands in the pockets of his sweatpants. “I should be asking you why the hell you’re here.”

Simmons’ face twisted up as she continued to glare at him, “I’m looking for Daisy.” she spat, casting uneasy glances at the huge black dog that sat right next to Grant’s leg. “What have you done with her?”

Grant blinked. Daisy? He didn’t know who that was. Unless Simmons was talking about Skye. Hadn’t she changed her name in the real world or something? He really didn’t remember. All he knew was that Skye didn’t go by Daisy here. “Unless you’re talking about Skye, I don’t know who the hell you’re talking about.” he stated. “But she’s not not here right now.”

“I come all of this way and she’s not here?!” Simmons demanded, taking a step forward. She stepped back again as the dog suddenly sat up and started growling at her. Her eyes shot back up to Grant, “And will you tell your dog to be quiet?”

He shrugged, “Max is free to do whatever the hell he likes. Hell, I wouldn’t care if he hauled off and bit you, but I’m not going to let that happen. You obviously still mean a whole lot to Skye and I don’t want to hurt her like that.” he stated coldly, hostility seeping into his voice. He still hated Simmons after her attempt to kill him and her attitude right now definitely wasn’t helping at all. “She said that she needed you in order to get out of here, but you disappeared.”

Simmons’ face fell, “Get out of here?” she echoed. “How the hell do you know about that? You’re just a part of the programming. You shouldn’t know that this is a simulation.”

Grant smiled, “And what makes you think that I’m really just a piece of code?” he asked slyly. “Tell me.”

Her face fell even more and she took another step back. How could he possibly be so aware? It honestly didn’t make any sense whatsoever to her. Unless… One possible way drifted into her mind,
but she didn’t want to admit it. She didn’t want it to be true in any possible reality. Especially after all
that had happened between him and the team.

“You’re alive.” Her mouth grew dry and she continued to cast uneasy glances towards the dog that
Grant had called ‘Max’. “You’re just like the rest of the team.”

Grant nodded and pushed past her, heading towards the couch. His headache had grown even more
due to Simmons’ sudden appearance and he knew that he couldn’t continue to stand for much
longer. “Unfortunately, I am.” he huffed, sitting down on the couch and leaning back. “I’m stuck
here like every single damn one of you.”

“No, this isn’t possible.” Simmons protested, remaining where she stood. She didn’t want to be near
him. “You died before the Framework was built. There’s no way that you should be in here.”

“Look, I don’t know how I’m here either. I just know that my consciousness is stuck here and there’s
no way for me to get out on my own. Skye offered to help find me a way out if I helped her find the
others. So I took that offer.”

“You’re still just as selfish.”

Grant raised an eyebrow, but didn’t look over to her, “I’m not doing this for just myself. I wanted to
help her, too. Consider this a way of making up for what I did.”

Simmons snarled, “How the hell do you think that anyone would ever forgive you after what you
did?!” she almost screamed. “Just this one thing isn’t going to do a single damn thing for that!”

“I’m not doing this for your fucking forgiveness. I know that I’m not going to get that. I’m doing this
to get some of the guilt off of my chest.” Grant snapped, sitting up to glare at her. “Yes, I do regret
what I did, but I’m not crawling to any of you to beg for forgiveness.

I don’t care for any of you. This is just a form of closure for myself so I can sleep at night.” he
continued. “I don’t expect any of you bastards to forgive me. I’ll be lucky enough if Skye forgives
me.”

“Where is she anyways?” Simmons asked coldly, wanting to move the subject on. Grant was
honestly making her feel sick to her stomach. Of course he was doing this for himself, but she didn’t
know the entire truth behind it.

She didn’t know that Grant was practically dying and would fade away if he didn’t make it out of
here soon. She didn’t know that he was fighting for his life while trying to save the others in the
process. And she would never know that.

Grant wasn’t going to tell anyone about his dilemma.

“She’s still back at SHIELD doing God knows what.” Grant answered, leaning back in the couch
once more. “I left early because I wasn’t feeling well. I was taking a nap until you graciously
interrupted it.”

“SHIELD? How the hell is SHIELD here?” Simmons asked coldly, taking a couple cautious steps
towards where Grant was, only stopping as Max growled again. “Hydra’s fucking everywhere.”

“It’s easy to hide when you’re an underground resistance-type force.”

“And how do you know?”
“’Cause I work for them.”

“Y-You work for SHIELD?” Simmons stammered, not understanding what was going on. “How is that possible?”

“Do I always have to be the bad guy in your book?” he asked coldly, sitting up and petting Max on the head to ensure that he wouldn’t attack her. “I work for SHIELD, end of story. So does Skye, we’re partners. We’ve been so ever since I was sent to arrest her and SHIELD hired her instead of locking her up.” A smile ghosted on his lips, but quickly diminished when he remembered that his Skye was gone.

“And we remained SHIELD when Hydra rose up and took everything over.” he continued. “I was never Hydra.”

“That can’t be right.” she protested. “Again, none of this is real and you’re supposed to be dead, so maybe I shouldn’t worry.”

“Oh, really? You’re supposed to be dead in this world, so should I say something about that?” he sneered, getting really tired of Simmons’ attitude. “Yet you’re standing right in front of me.”

A muscle twitched in Simmons’ face, but she chose to remain silent. She wasn’t about to tell him that she had clawed her way out of a grave a couple of days ago.

Grant smiled, “Figured you wouldn’t have anything to say.” he stated. “Anyways, I’m supposed to be the good guy here. I was supposed to live in my own perfect little world. I had Skye, I had Max. I didn’t care about Hydra. This was supposed to be what I always wanted, but then everything got ruined. I realized that all of this was a lie and then the real Skye came. Now everything’s falling apart around me and I’m sure that I’m dying. Everything’s just screwed up and I can’t do anything about it.”

Simmons went to open her mouth to say something, but stopped as she realized what Grant had said. He was dying? How could that be? But she knew that it was probably something he didn’t want her to ask about.

“Look,” Grant began, standing to his feet and not waiting for her to respond. “I’ll call Skye and tell her that you’re here. I’m sure that she’ll be glad. I left the care there, so she has a way to get back. At least we now have you and Mace. That’ll make thing easier.”

Grant left the room before Simmons could say anything about Mace. At least it sounded as though they had already gotten through to him. But Simmons had no idea to where any of the others could be. She just hoped that everyone could be found soon enough.

She looked down to find that the dog had stayed in the room, obviously to keep her away from Grant. The dog, which she assumed was a German shepherd, looked up at her with bright, brown eyes. He growled as she took a step forward and kept staring at her as she went to sit down in a chair.

“Look,” she began. “I may hate him, but it’s obvious that it’s not a good idea to try anything against him. So you can calm down.”

The dog just continued to stare at her as though he didn’t trust her words. He didn’t like the fact that she had been yelling at his owner, so he didn’t like her one bit.

“It’s not like you’re real anyways.”
Chapter End Notes

And of course Simmons is going to treat Grant like crap here. It's only a matter if she realizes that he's actually an ally or not. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Grant has another harsh talk with Simmons before Skye shows up.

Now, Grant’s phone call to Skye only lasted about thirty seconds. Once he had managed to explain that Simmons was actually alive and was currently in their apartment, Skye had hung up. Grant only assumed that she was now hurrying to get back here now that she knew that Simmons was alive. And he hated that it seemed as though Skye cared way more about Simmons than he.

But it was warranted, wasn’t it? He had hurt them so much that they no longer cared for him. Maybe it was just a reminder that his Skye was gone, that his perfect life had been all but destroyed. No, their hatred of him was just a painful reminder that he couldn’t be happy in any world that he was in.

Grant stuffed his phone into the pocket of his sweatpants and began to rub at his temples. His headache hadn’t subsided at all and he felt as though he was going to split into two. And of course, the current situation didn’t help one bit. He groaned as he started back towards the door of the bedroom and into the living room.

When he opened the door, he found Simmons sitting quietly in one of the chairs, Max keeping close watch on her. “Skye’s on her way, should take her thirty minutes at the most.” he spoke up, frowning as Simmons flinched at the sound of his voice and turned to look at him. “You two can talk or whatnot and I can get some sleep. None of this is helping my damn headache.”

Simmons scoffed and looked away, “Like I care.” she muttered under her breath. “You deserve worse.”

A muscle twitched in Grant’s face, “I’m sorry, what was that?” he asked coldly, clenching his fists at his sides. He really wasn’t in the mood for this at all.

“I said that you deserve worse!” Simmons snapped, keeping her gaze away from him. “And to think I have to be around your bloody ass!”

“I don’t like this either, but I’m doing it for Skye!” Grant growled, anger seeping into his voice. “Like it or not, we have to work together to get the hell out of here. I don’t have time for your shit.”

“You think that doing one thing will get yourself into her favor?” Grant frowned as Simmons stood to her feet and glared at him. “News flash, she hates you. I know very well that she’s just forcing herself to work with you. None of this is going to make her forgive you.”

“Like I said earlier, I’m not doing this for forgiveness. I’m doing this to get myself out because I am suffering here. And Skye doesn’t deserve to be here either. I am not looking for forgiveness, I’m helping so I can sleep a little better at night.”

Simmons sneered, “You’re so fucking selfish.” she chided. “All you care about here is yourself. I bet you don’t care if the others get out or not.”
Grant snarled and took a step backwards, “Just shut the hell up. No one needs your self-righteous ass.” he growled. Grant was so exhausted, his now-migraine just kept draining his strength. He knew that he wouldn’t make it much longer before passing out. And Simmons was just making everything worse.

“You don’t even have the right to call me such!” she exclaimed, eliciting a growl from Max. “Not after everything that you did!”

“And I’d like for people to stop reminding me of what I was! Yes, I know that I was a monster! I regret every single fucking thing that I did! But, I’d like to move past that and try to live a somewhat-normal life!” Grant almost screamed back, gripping at the side of his head with a hand. “But it looks like I can never get that, not even in an alternate reality!

I have everything perfect here! I never paid attention to Hydra, so I was happy. I had a Skye that loved me. Max was my entire world.” he continued. “Skye and I were eventually going to settle down somewhere and get married. It was everything that I ever wanted, but then it all fell apart. I was reminded that I couldn’t be happy anywhere and that I always have to be suffering in some way. I don’t need you reminding me as well. So, please, leave me alone.”

Simmons frowned as she saw the genuine pain shining in the man’s eyes and she fully noticed that he looked really sick, like he was about to pass out. But she knew that it was best that she didn’t ask him about it. She didn’t need him exploding on him again. It was obvious that something was wrong, did it have to do with the fact that he had mentioned he was dying? Honestly, she didn’t want to know and she truly didn’t care.

Grant’s eyes drifted to a clock on the wall, “Look, Skye should be here in just a bit.” he said quietly. “She’ll know what to do from here. I’m going to do what I was doing when you so boldly interrupted earlier. I’m going to take my dog and I’m going to sleep. So, leave me the hell alone for the next two hours or so.” He turned and left without another word, heading towards the kitchen to grab something to drink and something cold to press up against his aching head.

“Hopefully she’ll shut up once Skye gets here. I just need to sleep some and I’ll be fine.” he thought, taking the cold water bottle he had gotten out of the fridge and pressing it up against his head. He looked to Max, whom of which sat right next to his bare feet, “I can’t keep doing this. I can’t keep acting like I’m fine. They’re both smart, they’ll catch on sooner or later. I can’t keep the fact that I’m dying from them. And I’m getting worse and worse by the day. If they don’t hurry up and figure a way to get to everyone else, I’ll be dead before we can get the hell out of here.”

He looked up as he heard the door fly open and someone run into the foyer.

“Simmons, thank goodness that you’re alive!”

He grimaced, remembering that this Skye cared way more about Simmons that she did for him, and pressed the bottle harder up against the side of his head. He knew that they were talking, but their words were starting to become distorted and he couldn’t make anything out. It took all of his strength for him to walk back into the living room and get Skye’s attention.

“Now that you two can finally talk, I’m going back to bed.”

Skye looked up as she frowned as she met Grant’s eyes, noticing that he looked absolutely horrible. “Oh, God, are you okay?” she asked. “Mace said that you left early, but didn’t say why. Are you sick?”

Grant shook his head. Figures that she already noticed that he looked miserable. “No, I’m not sick.”
he stated lightly. “I’ve had a migraine all day and I left early to try and get rid of it. I was almost asleep when she arrived.” He casted a nasty glare towards Simmons and looked back towards Skye, “I’ll go sleep for a few hours while you two catch up and figure out what the hell to do next and I should be fine.”

“Ward,”

“I’ll be fine.”

Grant turned around without another word and headed back towards the bedroom, Max right on his heels. He really didn’t want to stay in the room any longer, especially with Simmons being in there. Once he got into the bedroom, he placed the water bottle aside and crawled back into the bed, Max following after him.

He wrapped his arms around the shepherd and buried his head into the dog’s soft, black fur. “At least you make me feel better.” he thought. “Skye doesn’t make me feel better anymore, I’d never thought that the day would come. Everything’s falling apart and I’ll soon be dead. I can’t ever have what I want.

*It’s not like I deserve it anyways.*

Chapter End Notes

I know that this is kind of short, but I'm really stressed out right now due to finals next week, so I really can't think straight. But, hey, I tried. So, Grant's starting to get worse and his anger is starting to become a problem, especially with Simmons treating him the way she is. Can he manage to work with her and Skye, or will his problems get the best of him? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
It's Coursing Through My Veins

Chapter Summary

Another plan is made.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(A Couple of Hours Later)

Grant awoke with a groan, slowly peeling his eyes open to avoid the light from suddenly burning them. He shifted, causing Max to wake and turn his head to look at him. Grant smiled and ran a hand over the dog’s head as the dog tried to lick him.

“Hey, boy.” Grant croaked, slowly sitting up. “Did you have a good nap as well? I think I did. At least my headache’s gone, I just feel like crap now.” He rubbed at his eyes and slid out of the bed, standing shakily onto his feet. He was glad that his migraine had faded away, but he still felt like shit because of the aftermath. It would probably take the rest of the day for him to feel better and a quick look at the clock on the bedside table told him that it was already six in the evening. He really needed to start cooking him and Skye something to eat. Unless Simmons was still here.

Grant slowly made his way to the door, stopping just in front of it. He could hear muffled voices, so he assumed that Skye and Simmons were still talking about whatever the hell had happened to him. “Do I really want to go out there when she’s still out there?” he thought. “But it’s not like she’s just going to leave. Hopefully Skye convinced her that I’m an ally here.”

He took a deep breath and began to reach for the doorknob, “You ready, Max?” he asked, casting a glance towards the black shepherd. “I know that you don’t like her either, but we have to deal with her for the time being. Just go say hi to Skye or something. Okay?”

Of course Max didn’t respond. He just looked up at his owner with bright, brown eyes. But Grant took that as an answer anyways.

The door creaked slightly as Grant pulled it open, stepping out into the small hallway as both Skye and Simmons’ voices filled his ears. He couldn’t quite understand what they were talking about. Something about someone named ‘Aida’. He thought that Skye had mentioned ‘Aida’. He thought that Skye had mentioned that name to him, but he wasn’t quite sure. His mind had been one huge mess lately. He was lucky that he even remembered that Skye wasn’t his Skye anymore.

The clatter of Max’s paws filled the air around Grant as he and the dog made their way down the hallway. Grant came just into the living room when he stopped, his eyes resting on Skye. They hadn’t quite noticed that he was now in the room, and he wasn’t quite sure to whether or not he should speak up or not. But Max made the decision for him anyways.

Max let out a happy bark and went scampering towards Skye. Even though he had seen her earlier before he had gone to bed with Grant, he hadn’t gotten the chance to greet her just yet. A small smile pulled at Grant’s lips as Max practically jumped into Skye’s lap, begging for her attention.
“Hey, boy, you up?” she cooed at him, stroking him behind one of his ears. Even though she hadn’t been in this world long, she had already taken a strong liking to the shepherd.

Her eyes trailed up towards the door frame and stopped when she saw Grant standing there. “Ward,” she began, standing to her feet and not noticing how Simmons grimaced as she did so. “Are you okay? I know that you’re not the one to take a nap of all things. And you left in the middle of the day. Is everything-”

“I’m fine.” Grant cut in, holding up a hand and walking more into the room. “I just had a migraine, that’s all. My head’s been messing with me today. Figured that it was best that I come back here and rest a little while. But I didn’t expect company.” He glared straight at Simmons. “How did you even find where we live anyways?”

“I was looking for Daisy, you know.” Simmons spat, turning her gaze away from him. “Didn’t think that I would find you.”

“That’s not even her name here.”

“Ward,” Skye began. “I don’t think that even matters here.”

“Her name may be Daisy or whatnot in the outside world, but she’s Skye here.” Grant growled, her name obviously a sore spot for him. But it was just another reminder that his Skye was long gone. “It’s not good to go around calling her by a name that no one here knows. It’ll arouse suspicions.”

“Look, I don’t care what you think.” Simmons was obviously upset that Grant was even talking, let alone telling her what she needed to do. “You,”

“Simmons, that doesn’t matter right now.” Skye cut in, sitting back down. “I think we have bigger matters to worry about here than what to call me. We still have to get to the others. At least we have you and Mace.”

“What’s your plan there?” Grant spoke up, sliding into the furthest chair away from Simmons. “I was asleep for a while, so that gave you enough time to come up with at least something.”

Skye sighed, and leaned back, “We figured that we would try to go after Coulson next.” she stated. “I mean, he is probably the easier to get to.”

“Oh boy, more fuel for the ‘Let’s Hate on Ward Train’.” Grant thought, a visible grimace settling onto his face. “Why not Agent Mackenzie?” he asked. “It may be a little easier to get to a civilian rather than a schoolteacher.”

“Well, we’ve already pinpointed Coulson’s location, so I figured that we should go ahead and get to him before something happens.”

Grant groaned silently and shrugged, “Whatever. You’re the one making rescue plans here, not me.” he retorted. “But shouldn’t I be one of the ones being rescued? I’m stuck in this damn world as well. They act like everyone else is so damn important. And I may be gone before everyone else can be found.”

“Can you drop the attitude?” Simmons hissed, sending a nasty glare his way. “We-”

“I already told you that I wasn’t taking any of your shit.” Grant snapped, a muscle twitching in his face. “And I told you that I wanted you to leave me the hell alone. I don’t have time for any of this.” He looked towards Skye, “Please don’t tell me you’ve already told her that she could stay here.”
“Well, it’s not like she’s got anywhere else to stay.” Skye began, giving Grant a frown. “We-

“She can’t stay at the SHIELD base? They could probably use the extra hands anyways with the refugees and all. And besides, it’s not safe for her to be out in the open anyways. She is a dead woman walking anyways. It would be best for her to be in SHIELD protection.”

Simmons began to snarl at Grant when Skye answered. “Actually,” she began, looking towards Simmons. “He does make a fair point. You are supposed to be dead here, so it’s not good for you to be out in the open. You need to be somewhere where you’re safe. And besides, Mace will be happy to see you.”

“Fine.” Simmons huffed, glaring at Grant. “Guess I could lend a helping hand or two with the people taking shelter there. By how you make it sound, they really need some extra hands. But you’re just gonna stay here with him?”

“I have a name, you know.” Grant spoke up, crossing his arms.

“Well, yeah. We can’t make anything seem suspicious. I know that Mace is already woken up, but we’ve still got to appear as close to normal as possible. So if that means we have to put up a facade of us being together, we’ll do it. It’s not like I’m sleeping in the same bed with him or anything.” Skye explained. “You have to be willing to ally yourself with anyone here.”

Simmons didn’t respond to that.

“Look, I’ll take you both to the base.” Grant stated, standing to his feet. He looked towards Simmons, “You need to get settled in there and I need to do a few things there since I left early. I’ll go get changed. We’ll leave in five.”

Grant walked back off towards the bedroom, but didn’t notice that Skye and Max had followed him as he did so. He went to go for the dresser when Skye’s voice stopped him.

“You know, I tried to convince her that you’re an ally here.”

He turned around, frowning as he did so, “Let me guess. She didn’t believe you, didn’t she?” he asked coldly.

“Unfortunately. Just don’t try to fight every chance that you get. Especially since it’ll get worse once we do get through to Coulson.” she explained. “You just have to try and endure it until we can find you a way out.”

“Don’t remind me.” Grant stated coldly, turning back towards the dresser and reaching for a black Henley. “I’m doing you a favor by getting Simmons to stay at the SHIELD base while we stay here. Should keep her out of my hair.”

Skye reached out and placed a hand on his shoulder, “Look, if we’re all going to get out of here, we all have to work together. I know it’s going to be hard for you, but please try. Once we’re out of here, you can go off on your own. But you have to work with everyone else before then.”

Grant’s eyes trailed longingly at Skye’s hand before he looked back towards her, “Fine. Just… Just try to keep them from killing me, okay?” he asked quietly. “I don’t want to end up with my chest being crushed. Again.”

“I’ll try.”

He nodded and turned away, “Go ahead and get ready. I’ll be out in a minute.” he stated quietly.
“And get Max ready, too.”

“Why would I need to get him ready as well?”

“Because I’m taking him with us. I need someone to keep me calm when we’re there. And besides, he likes to go on car rides anyways.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait on this. I had exams all week and never really had the chance to write. But now that I'm out for the summer, I'll try to keep everything updated regularly. I'll try to get to either I Am Machine or Fire in the Sky tomorrow night. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Don't Wanna Let You Down, but I am Hellbound

Chapter Summary

Grant and Skye have a heart to heart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Later That Night)

“Look, it’s probably best that I don’t go with you when you go to get Coulson tomorrow.”

Skye blinked as Grant placed a sandwich in front of her, “Wait, why?” she asked, watching as he made his way around the kitchen’s island so he could sit in front of her. “You’re the only one other than Mace that knows this world and can help us. We need you.”

Grant paused mid-bite of his own sandwich and placed it back down. “No, you don’t here. Coulson’s probably the one person that hates me the most. I don’t need to be there when you get through to him. I don’t want to be killed.” he stated with a smug smile, picking his sandwich back up and taking a bite of it.

“But what will he do when he sees you when we bring him here?” Skye questioned, raising her eyebrow. “I don’t think the place matters.”

“It’s not about that. It’s about trying to get him here. He won’t want to go with you if I’m there as well.” he stated, tearing off a piece of bread and leaning over to give it to Max, whom of which sat patiently right next to him. “I know that he’ll be more than happy to see you and Simmons, but he’ll be far from so when he sees me. And there’s nothing I can do to convince him that I’m not the bad guy anymore. I’ll never be a good man in his eyes, no matter what I can do. Hell, I could die trying to get all of you out of here and he’ll still find some bullshit reason to why I’m so ‘evil’.”

Grant’s face fell and he shook his head, “I could never atone for my crimes in his eyes.” he stated solemnly. “I wouldn’t be able to do so for anyone else either. Hell, I’m risking my damn life here and it won’t do a single thing. Coulson, Simmons…. All of them. It won’t matter. They’ll still see me as a monster in the end.”

Skye frowned as she saw the growing pain in Grant’s eyes. Honestly, he was pretty much risking everything to help her and the others when he knew that the others wouldn’t appreciate his actions at all. “Then why do you care to what they think?” she asked quietly, picking at her own sandwich. “I thought you didn’t care about that.”

“I… I don’t know.” he admitted. “Honestly, I am mostly doing this for you. But… I still feel guilty for everything that I did. I thought that helping would be a way to wash that guilt away. That…” he trailed off and looked away. “That maybe I wouldn’t be seen a monster by everyone anymore. Then I could live with myself. I could go off somewhere and live a peaceful life without that guilt eating me away. But I know that that’s a hell of a lot to ask for after everything that I did.”

“Yeah,” Skye quietly agreed, nibbling on her sandwich. At least Grant made some pretty amazing
sandwiches.

“You did do a whole lot of terrible shit.” she continued, swallowing a bite. “It’s gonna be pretty hard for the others to even look past that. You saw how Simmons was. It was hard enough for me to convince her that you were an ally here.”

“That’s expected. I hurt each and every one of you in some way or another.” Grant stated with a nod of his head. “Fitz, I almost killed him. Simmons, almost killed her too and tortured her. Double-crossed and hurt May. I failed and lied to Coulson.” He looked down towards the island, “And I… I broke your heart. I found some way to hurt you all. There’s no way that I could possibly come back from that.”

Skye looked away, watching as Max paddled his way over to her to look for a treat, “I mean, I think all that matters right now is that you’re trying. That you realized what you did was horrible and that you’re trying to repent.” she stated. “But I am not the others and I can’t control what they think about you.”

Grant frowned and looked towards her, “What do you mean?” he asked, watching Skye give Max a potato chip. “What do you mean that ‘you’re not the others’?”

“It means just what I said. No matter what I say, I can’t change what they think about you. That’s up to you.” she answered. “You have to prove that you’re not the enemy anymore. And helping us out of the Framework is probably a pretty good start.”

“Then what do you think about me?”

She froze and wasn’t sure of what to say. Sure, she appreciated that he was trying to help and saw that he had changed, but she didn’t know how she felt about him. How was she even supposed to express that?

“I… I don’t know.” she began. “It’s hard to tell. You haven’t done enough yet. But I can tell you one thing though.”

“And what’s that?”

“I can tell that you’ve changed. That you’re not that guy anymore. But it’s still too early for me to tell anything else.” Skye stood to her feet, causing Max to jump up and wag his tail excitedly. “You haven’t done enough just yet.”

Grant raised an eyebrow, “And just how do I change that?”

“Prove that you’re the good man you’re wanting to be. Make sure that all of us get out of here. Then I’ll see how I feel then.”

She left the room without another word.

Grant’s heart dropped and he suddenly felt sick again. “How’s that any good when I’m sure that I’m not going to be able to make it out of here at all?” he thought. “Whatever’s wrong with me, it’s getting worse by the day. If they don’t hurry up and get everyone else and destroy that ‘Aida’ person they’re talking about, I’ll be dead before they even find a way out.

I’m not supposed to be here. I’m just some kind of glitch in the system. A virus. And the Framework’s a computer. It’s finding a way to destroy the virus. It’s finding a way to kill me. And it’ll get that sooner or later. Maybe it’ll at least be a heroic death and that’ll cause the others to see me differently.
Grant sighed and stood to his feet, taking the dirty plates and putting them away. He was glad that it had just been him and Skye. Simmons had gone to help some of the refugees for the time being; it was obvious that she didn’t want to be around him at all. But he didn’t blame her, even he really didn’t want to be around himself most of the time. But he couldn’t escape from himself.

“You ready to go to bed, boy?” Grant asked, looking down at Max. “I know that we’re not at home, but I have a room here. We can sleep here. We’ll go back home in a couple of days, okay?”

Max barked and looked up at Grant, his tongue hanging out the side of his mouth.

Grant turned and began to head out of the room, Max right on his heels. He just wanted to get some more peace and quiet before Skye and Simmons went to go get Coulson tomorrow. Honestly, he wasn’t ready for the chaos that would ensue once Coulson saw that he was alive. So Grant needed as much time to himself as possible before then.

“At least once Coulson’s here, then they can go for Mackenzie. We’ll have to put up one hell of a fight to get to Fitz, if that’s even possible. This place needs to be taken down, no matter what. And hopefully, that’ll be soon. I don’t want to die before I can see this place burn.”

Chapter End Notes

It seems that Skye’s feelings towards Grant are starting to change, and in a good way. If only the others’ feelings would change as well. Grant’s just afraid that he won’t make it to see the day. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Promises I Made You Should Ignore

Chapter Summary

Coulson comes to the base.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Sometime the Next Day)

“Daisy, I can’t believe it! I was teaching nothing but lies!”

Grant immediately groaned as soon as he recognized the voice that rang out from the hallway. “Coulson. So it must’ve been pretty easy to get to him. Won’t be easy once he steps foot in here and sees me.” He sighed and came to his feet, “Better prepare myself for the apocalypse. I wouldn’t be surprised if he threw himself at me to try and kill me.” He reached for the gun in its holster on his belt to ensure that it was still there. Worst case scenario, he would have to shoot Coulson to try and protect himself. But, since he was doing this for Skye, he had to restrain himself. No matter what Coulson tried to do.

“All they do is spread lies it seems, sir.” Simmons spoke up as they neared the common room. “So of course they had history altered to their liking. It is a fascist regime after all.”

“Did I mention the soap?”

“What?” Grant heard Skye ask as they stepped into the room, Coulson oblivious to the fact that he was in there. “I don’t think I even want to know. But we’re glad that we were able to get to you, though. We need to get to Mack next so then we can go after May and Fitz.”

“You haven’t gotten to him yet?” Coulson asked, taking off a pair of glasses. He looked over to Simmons, “So she was the second you got to? You said that you had gotten through to Mace before her.”

“I, uh, wasn’t exactly the second. More like the third.” Grant cringed as he heard the malice in Simmons’ voice.

“There was another? That can’t be possible. There were only six of us in here.” Coulson frowned and looked back to Skye, “Did you find Radcliffe or something?”

“She’s talking about me.” Grant spoke up, coming out of his hiding place in the shadows and making his way over to them. “I was the very first one Skye found.”

Coulson immediately froze up and all the color drained from his face. Both fear and hatred shone in his eyes as he looked towards him. “W-What the hell are you doing here?” he stammered, backing away slightly. “You should be dead! I killed you myself!”

A smug smile pulled at Grant’s lips, “Then you didn’t try hard enough.” he retorted, casting a quick glance towards Skye, whom of which had moved over to him. “I’m still here.”
“How the ever-living fuck is this possible? You’ve been dead for over a year.” Coulson spat, pointing a finger at him. “You need a body to be able to upload here.”

“How I’ve told both Skye and Simmons, I have no idea to how I’m here. Like most, it seems like I’ve been here my entire life. Well, until I started to see through the cracks and I woke up.” Grant explained, sticking his hands into his pockets. “Somehow, my consciousness was stuck in here when this place was created a few months ago. Don’t ask me how, because I know I should be long-dead by now. Something brought me back and stuck me in this hellhole.”

“And why the hell are you here? Why aren’t you with Hydra?”

“Newsflash, asshole, I don’t have to always be the bad guy.” Grant sneered, taking a step forward. “I’m SHIELD here. I used to be Hydra, but something pulled me away.”

Coulson’s head whipped towards Skye, “How on Earth did you run across him?” he growled.

Skye shrugged, “He was in my bed.” she answered nonchalantly. “No big deal.” It was obvious that the two’s hatred of one another had greatly died down in the past few days already. Only because Skye had realized that Grant was a valuable ally here and there was no need for her attitude.

“In your bed?” Coulson sounded absolutely disgusted.

“We were together here, Coulson.” Grant deadpanned. “She was one of the reasons to why I stayed with SHIELD and to why I never ran to Hydra. We wanted to make a difference and I wanted to protect her.” He paused and looked away, “She was one of the only good things I had going for me here. Now that’s gone.” He looked down to Max, whom of which had just trotted up to him from where he had been sleeping on the couch, “I have him, though.”

Coulson’s eyes narrow as he looked down at the black shepherd, still trying to make sense of things. “But why are you here, though?” he asked coldly. “Why are you helping?”

“I’m not doing this for you or your damn forgiveness, Phil.” Grant stated, crouching down so he could pet Max. “I’m doing this so I can get the guilt to stop eating me alive for once. I’m also doing this for Skye. She’s the only person I’m physically doing this for. And I’m doing this so I can also get the hell out of here.”

“Well, maybe for Fitz as well, but that’s another story.”

“Then you’re still a selfish son of a bitch.”

“You can call me as many names as you want, but I’m not running away. I won’t be able to get out of here if I do that. I’m not staying in here.”

“Like I’d let you do such a thing. You deserve to rot in- “

“Coulson!” Skye snapped, sending a glare his way as Grant stood to his feet. “We don’t have time for this. We have to make any ally here we can. If one happens to be Grant Ward, then so be it. Deal with it, okay?”

Grant sneered and stepped forward, grabbing Coulson by his shirt collar and pulling him close, “Don’t you think I’ve suffered enough?” he hissed. “I’ve died. I’ve been trapped in my own mind. Now I’m trapped in some kind of technological hellhole. I’ve suffered long enough. I deserve some rest. I know that I did some horrible shit, but I think all of this is enough punishment several times over. I’ve already paid for it with my life.
If I get a second chance, just let it happen. I’m just planning on going off on my own and living a nice, comfortable life. It’s not like I’m going to go murder more people once I’m out of here.” he continued. “I’ll be out of your hair and you won’t hear from me again. I just want to be able to live a normal life for once. And I don’t need your permission to do so. It’s my decision. You don’t own me.” Grant growled and shoved Coulson away, “Get that stick out of your ass and worry about the things that really matter here.”

Grant returned to the couch and sat back down, Max joining him as well.

“Grant’s right, Coulson.” Skye stated lightly, turning her attention back to him. “We’ve got bigger things to worry about here than him. We’ve got to focus on finding the others. And we need all the help that we can get, so he’s staying.”

“So, you’re wanting me to rely on the Devil for help?” Coulson spat, sending a glare towards the back of Grant’s head. “Not likely. I’d ask Loki for help before I’d ask him.”

“Are you really saying that Grant’s worse than the crazed alien that killed you?!”

“Does it really matter?!”

“Yes, it does! Look, he’s an ally here, so get the hell over it.” Skye spat and turned away from him. “Come on, let’s go find Mace.”

“You know, I think I saw him on our way in.” Simmons spoke up, hoping to move the conversation on. Even though she hated Grant with every bone in her body, she had still accepted that Grant was unfortunately an ally here. “Let’s go.”

“Skye, please get Coulson out of here.” Grant growled from the couch. “I’d like to not have a migraine for once. And he’s not helping.”

Skye nodded and pulled Coulson out of the room before he could protest. Simmons followed them as well.

“Give me a fucking break.” Grant thought, leaning his head back and staring up at the ceiling. He threaded his fingers through Max’s fur as the dog placed his head on his lap. “I knew that it would be bad, but not that bad. Coulson need to let it go. I’m not going to hurt him unless he hurts me first. We’ve got to trust one another here, no matter how painful it is. I’d like to get out of here without getting my chest crushed again.”

He looked at Max, running his hand over the dog’s head, “But at least you love me, right?” he asked as the dog looked up at him. “At least you won’t ever hurt me.”

Max only barked in response.

“Good.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I skipped the whole thing where Skye and Simmons break through to Coulson, but that was only due to time reasons. I wanted to go ahead and get to him meeting Grant again so I can speed things up. I won’t be able to write much next week due to having knee surgery and I may be in the hospital for a night or two, so that’ll
delay things. So I want to try and get this as far as possible this week. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Chapter Summary

Some more things come to light.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

(The Next Morning)

“Hey, man. Is there something the matter?”

Grant looked up from his place on the couch to see Trip coming his way. He just shook his head and stood to his feet, “It’s nothing, Trip. I think I’ve just been a little sick lately, that’s all.” he replied. There was no way that he could actually explain the truth to Trip. He wouldn’t understand it at all since he was just a fabrication of the Framework. Grant had to keep reminding himself that Trip wasn’t real. And, honestly, Trip was Grant’s only friend here ever since his Skye had disappeared.

Trip raised a suspicious eyebrow, “You sure?” he asked. “It’s just because you’ve been acting really weird and distant lately. Especially ever since that Simmons lady came here.” He looked around the room before continuing. “Is, uh, everything fine between you and Skye?”

The color drained from Grant’s face and he immediately shook his head, “What do you mean?” he asked defensively. “Things have never been better between us. Why do you ask.”

“I don’t know, man. It’s just that things just seem strained between you two. You two used to be all over one another and now you don’t even lay a finger on her.” Trip explained, watching Grant’s body language. He knew that something was up. Even though Grant was supposed to be one of the best spies around, he still had his giveaway quirks. “You two didn’t happen to have a fight or something? I’m not going to judge or anything, I just want to know if you two are okay. That’s all.”

“Oh, it’s just that my girlfriend is gone and has been replaced with another version of her from another world. And by the way, this entire world is just a computer program and you’re just a part of it. And this world is slowly killing me and I may never make it out.”

“We’re fine.” Grant feigned a believable smile. “Trip, dude, you don’t have to worry about us like this. We’re just stressed with the current situation and all. Especially since the influx of refugees has increased a whole lot lately. We just haven’t had time to stop and be ourselves. No one’s quite normal right now.” He sighed and stuck his hands in his pockets, “Maybe, we’ll have another chance at normal once everything is all said and done.”

Trip raised his hands, “Alright, Grant, I’ll take your word for it.” he stated, knowing that he wasn’t going to get much else out of the man. “But getting a chance to be normal may be a long time from now. Not until Hydra can be completely taken out once and for all. And there’s no telling to how deep the heads go. Killing Madame Hydra isn’t the key, and even killing the Doctor won’t work at all either. Hell, I don’t even think that Mace is sure of how to take them down.”

“That’s because none of this is real and truly doesn’t matter in the end. My goal here isn’t to destroy
“Hydra. Hell, I’m sure that they’re gone in the real world after Hive was destroyed. The only way to get rid of the problem is to unplug the Framework, unfortunately.” Grant thought. “Hydra isn’t the real enemy here. That robot who has the others trapped in here is. According to Skye, Madame Hydra is actually the android that trapped them in here. So we actually may have to go after her. Especially if we want to get Fitz back. We.”

“Hey, man. You still there?”

Grant blinked and looked up to see Trip waving a hand in front of him. He shook his head and smiled again, “Sorry, I was just thinking.” he replied. “That’s all.”

“You know, for a top-notch spy, you really get distracted sometimes.”

“It’s been a rough past few days. Haven’t been sleeping well.”

Trip nodded slowly, “Dude, just take it easy, okay? We can’t afford to lose you if something ends up happening to you.” he stated. “If you’re unwell, just tell Mace and I’m sure that he can figure something out.”

“I’ll be fine, I promise.” Grant paused and looked to his watch. “Sorry, Trip, but I’ve got to get going. I’ve got to go relieve Skye of Max so she can leave on her mission.” he stated. “She’s supposed to leave after a while.”

“Why aren’t you going with her? You two are partners.”

“Yeah, but Mace decided at the last minute that he needed my help with something. I am his right-hand man after all. And besides, Skye’s more than capable of handling things by herself.” he explained. “And it’s not all too bad of a mission anyways, even though I can’t disclose the details of it though.”

Trip sighed, “Alright, but I’ll check up on you two anyways. I have to put some rookies through weapons training in a few anyways.” he stated, turning around. “See ya’.”

Grant nodded at Trip’s back and sighed, “See you later.” he stated simply, watching as Trip left the room. “Okay, I’ll go get Max from Skye and then I’ll go do my own thing. I still just want some time to myself before things get even more hectic than they are now.” he thought, walking out of the room as well and heading back to where he had left Skye and Max. He still didn’t know to why Skye wanted to have Max with her for a while; he assumed that the dog was growing on her.

He got to the common room a couple of minutes later, finding Skye chatting away with Simmons and Coulson. Max jumped up and ran straight to him with a loud bark as soon as he realized that his owner had come into the room. Grant smiled and petted Max briefly on the head before turning his attention back to Skye, “I’ve got Max, so I guess that means you’re going to get that Mack guy now, right?” He ignored how Coulson and Simmons glared at him.

Skye nodded, “Yeah, hopefully it won’t go that bad. We managed to find where Mack is, but it’s kind of like he’s off the grid. Like he’s hiding. Or it just could be the fact that Hydra servers are hard to get into and all I could find is where he lives.” she replied. “So we really don’t know to what we’re going to find when we get there. Are you sure that you don’t want to go with us? It’d be better to have some muscle.”

“No.” Grant stated firmly, keeping his gaze locked onto Skye. “You’ll be fine without me. And besides, it best if Agent Mackenzie has some familiar faces to see when he does wake up. I’m not the person to be there. As far as I know he hates me as well. Especially after what happened with Agent
Morse.” He paused and took a sharp breath, knowing that it was only a matter of time before Coulson started yelling at him again. “And you’re Inhuman. And I know that Coulson knows how to fight. It’s not like Mackenzie is in a Hydra fortress or anything. He’s in a neighborhood. If you don’t arouse suspicions and cause a patrol to show up, you should be fine. You don’t need me.”

“Good riddance.” Coulson grumbled, still refusing to acknowledge the fact that he had to work alongside Grant here. Simmons nodded in agreement.

“Grant, if this is about being around Coulson,” Skye began. “That,”

“It’s not about that. I just don’t need to be around someone that also hates me when they come to. It won’t help with trying to get them here and it might cause a scene.” Grant cut in, shaking his head. “It has nothing to do with Coulson’s filthy ass.” He took a sharp breath, “I’m just being smart here and I know that me staying behind is the best option. I’ll go when we go after May and Fitz. But not now.”

Skye bit her lip and sighed, “Fine. Hopefully, we won’t run into any trouble and we can get Mack here within a few hours.” she stated. “I trust your word.”

“Good. I’m going to take Max for a walk around the base. Maybe go back to the apartment for a while to have some alone time.” Grant said, turning around. “Call me if anything comes up.”

And, truly, Grant wasn’t staying behind because he didn’t think that they needed him. He still felt terrible and really didn’t want to be out in the field, especially around Coulson and Simmons. He knew that another migraine was coming and possibly even a hallucination. Things were just getting so much worse for him and he really wished that it wasn’t happening now that he was so close to getting out. It just reminded him that he could die before escaping this hell.

“Alright. Will do.”

And with that, Grant left the room with Max.

“Why do you trust him so much?”

Skye frowned and looked over to Coulson, “What?”

“Why are you trusting him? You know that his words are nothing but lies. He may be saying that he wants to help to clear his conscience and prove something to you. But what if this is all a ruse and he’s just using us?” Coulson asked coldly. “What if he just kills us all once we get out?”

“I… I don’t think that’s the case here.” Skye stated, not sure of why she trusted him herself. It was just that he seemed so different now and he was genuinely caring now. She really didn’t know what it was. It was like he was what she always had wanted him to be.

“I just have this feeling that we can trust him. I don’t know what it is, but I just do.” she continued. “Please, just do the same for once.”

“And you know what happened last time we trusted him.” Simmons almost snapped. “People got killed.”

“I know that, but,”

“Simmons is right, Daisy.” Coulson cut in with a hard stare. “We can’t trust him at all. We’re just working with him because you want us to and there’s no other way around it. You realize if he stabs us in the back again, it’s all on you.”
“He’s not,”

“He’s only doing this for himself. You heard him. He’s doing this so he won’t feel ‘guilty’ or whatnot anymore.” Simmons continued to argue. “He doesn’t give a damn about us!”

“And he won’t if you keep up like this! Look, we just have to trust him. I know that it’s hard, but we’ve got no other choice here.” Skye snapped, the ground rumbling slightly. “This attitude is just going to get us all killed.”

Coulson frowned and narrowed his eyes, turning away from him. “You’re not in love with him again, are you?” he asked coldly. “Please tell me that you’re not.”

Skye’s stomach dropped and she shook her head, “N-No I’m not.” she stammered. “He’s just an ally here, nothing more and nothing less. Come on, we’ve got to get going so we can get Mack.” She stood to her feet and began to storm off.

“I don’t love him. Hell, I don’t even like him.” she paused and frowned. “Wait, do I? I… I don’t even know.”

Skye didn’t even know the answer herself.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so this fic, along with my others, will be on hiatus after this chapter for a week or so (I'll update Fire in the Sky tomorrow.). I have to have knee surgery on Monday and have to spend a couple of nights in the hospital because of it. So I don't know when I'll feel like writing again. It may be a while, but I'll come back sooner or later! Keep the comments and kudos coming!
A Memory Forsaken

Chapter Summary

More are broken through to.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Later That Evening)

Grant looked up from his book as his phone rang from its place on the table next to him. He groaned slightly before picking it up and answering it. He didn't even bother looking to see who it was.

“Hello?”

“Grant? Good news.”

Grant straightened up at the sound of Skye's voice, causing Max to jump up in response. “What? Coulson finally keeled over?” he asked coldly, no humor in his voice whatsoever.

“Ha ha, very funny. Coulson's very much alive and well, much to your disliking. That aside, we got Mack.”

“You did? I assume that there wasn't much trouble there.”

“Well, I wouldn't say that.”

Grant frowned and stared off into the distance, “What do you mean?” he asked. “Hydra didn't get at you, did they?”

“No. But,” Skye paused for a bit before continuing. “He has a daughter here. That may complicate things when we get ready to leave. Apparently in the real world, she died when she was a baby. Here, she never died and Mack got to be the father he never got to be. It'll be hard to pry him away from that.”

He took a breath and thought for a moment. “Yeah, that may be hard to get him away from. Even if he knows that it's not real. Better to live a beautiful lie than live a painful truth.” He paused and thought of his own situation. A part of him wanted to live the lie and continue with this world's Skye. Get married and eventually have a kid or two after helping to defeat Hydra.

But he couldn't even get that lie. He was still dying here. He couldn't have anything at all.

“Well,” Skye sighed and paused for a few seconds. “It doesn't hurt to try. And it's not like we're able to bring his daughter over to the real world. Hell, we're not even sure if we can get you out or not.”

“Please don't remind me.” Grant snapped. “I'd like to think that there's actually some kind of hope for me.” His grip on his cell phone tightened. “Just drop it.”

“Woah, okay there, Mr. Grumps.” Skye shot back, alarm in her voice. “Sorry that I ever mentioned
it. I was just stressing a point. There's just so much uncertainty around everything. Like we don't know how to get to May or Fitz at all. They're buried deep into the Hydra chain of command."

“I'm sure that we'll figure something out sooner or later, even though time isn't on our side here.” Grant answered, grimacing as he heard a child's voice in the background. Only a reminder of what he couldn't have. He sighed and shook his head, “We may just have to go into everything blindly here and hope that it works. I don't think we can really formulate a good plan here.”

“You of all people are wanting to charge headfirst into this? I thought you liked well thought out plans?”

“Yeah, but we don't have time for that here, unfortunately.” Grant cut in, irritation rising in his voice. “We have to act now if we’re planning on getting the hell out of here soon. If we take the time to sit back and formally plan something out, everything may go to shit before we can even act.” He paused, “Or I’ll be dead before they can do anything. But she doesn’t know about that yet. No one can. And I don’t think that I’ll ever be able to tell them. It’s not like anyone would care if I’m dead again. Hell, would Skye even care?”

Skye’s voice cut into his thoughts, “Yeah, you’re right. We can’t just sit back and take our time with this. We need to act now if we’re to get May and Fitz back. The first step is probably getting at May since Fitz is so high up in the Hydra chain of command. And especially since it seems he has some kind of connection with AIDA here.” she explained. “We’ll probably have to fight like hell to get to him so we can break him out. Hopefully all of this won’t take long and we can get out within the next week.”

“Yeah, that’s considering you can find me a way out. I still may not be able to come with you.” Grant snapped, his eyes resting onto Max. “And it’s not like everyone else wants me to make it out. You’re probably the only one that even remotely gives a damn about me here. They rather see me dead and gone again before they even think about trying to help me. Hell, Coulson will probably find some way to make it to where I can’t make it through, even if we find me a way out. No matter how many times I tell him that everything’s in the past and that I want nothing to do with him, he can’t get it through that thick skull of his that I’m no longer a threat. I understand that I had lost it and that I had done some horrible shit, but can’t he and the others understand that I already paid for all of that with my life? There’s nothing else that I can give up.”

“Grant,” Skye began, her voice soft and low. She didn’t want to accidentally send him into a blind rage or anything of the such. “Look, we’ll deal with that when the time comes, okay? I’ll make sure myself that you find a way out. But we have to get to May and Fitz before then. That takes priority right now, okay?”

Grant sucked in a sharp breath and held it for a few seconds before slowly letting it out to try and calm his growing rage. “Okay, fine. Look, I’ll be back at the base in a few. I’ve got a few things to do around here first before I leave. Give me an hour or two.”

“Fine. We haven’t made it back either. That’ll give us enough time to make it back there as well. See you.”

“Yeah,” Grant almost trailed off. “See you.” He pressed end call and threw his phone aside with a flurry of cusses. “They don’t give a damn about me, why should I give a damn about them?” he thought, stomping his way towards the bedroom to get his jacket with Max hot on his heels. He paused at the dresser, frowning as the photo of him and Skye caught his eye. “Honestly,” He picked up the photo, “Even though this world is a mess and it’s honest to God killing me, this was really the best thing I ever had. She truly loved me. We wanted a family. And now that’s gone. She’s gone. I’ll be gone if those bastards don’t agree to help me soon.
I know I told Skye, Daisy, whatever, that I would do this to help her. But maybe I’ll convince myself that it’s for my Skye. She’d want me to do whatever it takes for me to live. Hell, even though she’s gone.” Grant sucked in another breath and placed the photo frame aside, feeling a migraine, or another hallucination (he really wasn’t sure), coming on. He knew that if he didn’t leave for the base now, he wouldn’t make it there anytime soon.

“I hate every last one of them except maybe Skye and Fitz. Everyone else can just kiss my ass for all I care.” he turned and grabbed his jacket off of the bed, leaving the room as he slipped it on. “Hell, maybe I am selfish. Maybe I am just doing this for myself. It’s not like I’m staying once I get out of here. I’m getting as far away from them as possible once this is all said and done. I’m only helping them so they won’t see me as a threat and I can get out of here. They don’t care about me, I just want to get this guilt off of my chest.

They… They just want me dead…”

Chapter End Notes

And I'm finally back with this! It's still pretty hard to get to my laptop due to my knee, so I have to do most writing on my phone. Which is pretty hard. But I still tried! Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Grant and Coulson have an unfortunate run-in.

(Sometime Later)

Grant watched with a disapproving gaze as he saw Skye walk past the common room, leading who he guessed to be Mack and his daughter deeper into the base. She was probably taking them to see Mace, whom of which would have instructions on how to settle down in the old SHIELD base.

Even though Grant knew that it was good that Mack had been broken through to, he hated it. It was only another reminder that the others were getting even closer to getting out of this hellhole. Even closer to his demise.

Grant knew that there was no way for him to get out of here, he had figured that out already. He knew that Skye was just telling him that because she pitied him. He didn’t need anyone’s pity, not even Skye’s. His survival was all that he wanted at this point and he was honestly getting to where he would do anything to see it through. Truly, he didn’t care to what anyone else thought, he knew that there would be at least one person that would try to make it to where he would die all over again.

And Grant wasn’t going to let that happen at all.

He sighed and returned back to the bar area, picking up his glass of whiskey once more. Honestly, it wouldn’t hurt for him to get just a little drunk at this point, it wasn’t like it mattered anyways. He figured that as long as he was drunk, nothing else could really bother him. He just wanted the pain of his oncoming death to be erased. Even if it was for only a couple of hours.

And, truly, he was halfway there. He could feel his head begin to grow heavy and the room start to sway. But as long as his pain was gone, Grant didn’t care to how drunk he got. And he wasn’t about to let anyone else stop him.

He knocked back about two more glasses’ worth before he laid his head on the bar counter, feeling the world spin around him. Even though nothing was real in this world, at least the experiences were. Every choice made here still mattered. It wasn’t like they were going to go away when this world was destroyed.

But, in this moment, all Grant wanted to do was to lay here and let the alcohol take over.

Even still, he couldn’t even get his solitude this way.

“What the everliving hell are you doing?”

Grant shot up, swaying as he did so. His eyes darted to the doorway of the room, immediately narrowing as he saw Coulson standing there. “And what the fuck are y-you doing there?” he slurred, pointing a shaky finger at the man. “Leave me the hell alone.”
Coulson’s eyes widened as he realized what was going on with Grant, “You’re drunk aren’t you?” he asked coldly, taking a step into the room. “We’re trying to rescue people right now, are you’re choosing to get flat-out drunk?”

Grant’s eyes narrowed again and he quickly shot to his feet, causing the barstool to fall over backwards with a loud crash. “And what’s it to you?” he growled, swaying on his feet. “I’m not doing anything important right now, so what if I chose to get a little drunk? You no longer tell me what to do. You’re not in charge here.”

“Does Mace know that his right-hand man is hiding out and drowning himself in alcohol?”

“He doesn’t care. No one cares.”

Coulson blinked, “Of course they don’t. It’s you. The only reason why we’re working with you is because Daisy want us-”

“Her name is Skye.” Grant cut in, his voice practically a growl.

“That may be her name here, but it isn’t in the real world.” Coulson snapped. “You shouldn’t get a word in any of this, especially after everything that you did.”

“I don’t care what the fuck you think about me.” Grant turned and faced the bar, eying the empty glass that he had left there. “I just wanna go home. This place isn’t home, not anymore. I was supposed to be happy here and that all got ruined. Skye and I,” He hiccupped and wiped at his eyes. “We were supposed to get married. We were supposed to have kids. Now all that’s ruined and I can’t ever get that back. At least let me survive and let me go off on my own. You… You won’t even see me ever again.”

A muscle twitched in Coulson’s face and he took a sudden step forward, “And do you really think that you deserve any of that?!?” he almost screamed. “You murdered people! You lied to us! You deserve to rot in-”

Coulson was cut off as something sailed past his head and crashed into the wall behind him. He turned to see a pile of broken glass on the floor. Looking back to Grant, he saw a rage-filled light in the man’s eyes and his hand clenched. Grant had tried to throw the glass at Coulson’s head, but had missed. But only because of the alcohol inhibiting his abilities.

“And don’t you think that I fucking know that?!” Grant screamed, taking wobbly steps towards the older man. “Don’t you think that I suffer everyday because of what I did?” His voice seethed with absolute rage. “I’ve already died and paid the price. I suffered in hell long enough. I remember almost everything that Hive did while I was all but defenseless. You can’t punish someone that’s already paid for their crimes.

And besides,” Grant got a whole lot closer to Coulson. “Who made you judge, jury, and executioner anyways?” he asked. “The last I remember, you were the leader of an underground agency, barely even recognized by the government. You don’t have those abilities.” Grant got close to Coulson and grabbed him by the collar of his shirt and pulled him close, close enough for Coulson to smell the alcohol on Grant’s breath. “Killing me in your own reasons makes you a murderer. You’re no better than me. Who’s the fucking monster now?”

Coulson swallowed and struggled to look Grant in the eyes, “I killed you for a reason. You were the monster, not me.” he tried to explain. “Hand, Koenig, Rosalind? What did they do to deserve death?”
“They were targets. Collateral damage. And besides, I wasn’t in my right mind anyways. Stop acting like you’re so damn innocent. I know for a fact that you hate whoever decides to stand against you. If you’re not with SHIELD, you’re the damned enemy. What a bunch of fucking bullshit.” Grant shoved Coulson back, causing the man to slam into the wall behind him. “I’m no more a monster than you are.” Grant bent down and picked up a long sliver of broken glass off of the ground, “I don’t care what happens to you. Not anymore.” He brought the shard to Coulson’s throat, “Maybe I should just make you suffer like I did. What happens when you get hurt here, huh? Do you still die?”

“I don’t know.” Coulson yelped as he felt the glass pierce his skin. “I know that you’re insane, but you don’t need to do this.” His mouth grew dry. “If you kill me, your chance at ever getting out of here goes down the shitter.”

Grant hesitated for a second but tightened his grip on the shard, cutting his own hand in the process, “It’s not like I’m getting out of here anyways. No one cares about me. I won’t—”

“Grant!”

Grant blinked and lowered his arm, blood dripping freely from his hand. He swayed on his feet as he turned to see Skye and Simmons standing in the doorway, horrified at the sight in front of them. “Skye,” he began, the glass dropping out of his bloodied hand. He swayed on his feet again.

Skye frowned and her gaze immediately shot towards Coulson, ignoring the blood welling up on his neck. “What the hell did you do?!?”

“And what makes you think I did anything! He was going to kill me!” Coulson exclaimed, wiping at the blood on his neck.

“I know that Grant wouldn’t attack you on purpose because he promised me. And besides, he’s drunk.”

“Maybe I said a few things to him, but that doesn’t excuse the fact that he tried to kill me!” Coulson exclaimed, getting far away from the now-confused Grant. “He was going to slit my throat!”

Skye’s mouth grew into a fine line and she turned to Grant, “Grant, were you going to kill him?” she asked quietly, not really sure of what to make of the situation. She had a strong feeling that Grant really wouldn’t remember any of this once he came out of it. Grant’s rage plus alcohol was a force to be reckoned with, even on his end. He’d probably be pretty sick afterwards.

Grant blinked and stared at the blood dripping from his hand, “No. I don’t wanna kill anyone.” he whimpered, sounding almost like a scared little kid. “I just don’t wanna die. I’ll die if I don’t get out of here soon. This world doesn’t like me. It wants me dead.” He swayed on his feet again. “Coulson doesn’t want me to be better. He wants me to die again.” He blinked again and looked around the room, nursing his injured hand, “I don’t feel good. I’ve always felt like shit.”

Skye’s stomach dropped. Wait, was Grant dying? Is that why he wanted out of here so badly? Had he been sick all along? “Grant,” she began softly. “Are you sick?”

He shrugged, “I dunno. My head hurts. The illusions won’t go away. I just wanna go home. I’m tired.”

“Daisy, Coulson’s neck needs to be looked at.” Simmons cut in, placing a hand on Skye’s shoulder. “He,”

“It’s a minor wound.” Skye snapped, upset that Coulson had pushed Grant this far. “He’ll be okay.” She pointed at Grant’s bloodied hand, “Grant needs stitches. I’m sure of it.”
“Well, I’m not doing it. I don’t want that lunatic anywhere near me.” Simmons almost hissed. “I will look at Coulson, but not him.”

And with that, Simmons and Coulson left the room, leaving a seething Skye to deal with Grant’s mess.

“I don’t like them.” Grant slurried, looking longingly at Skye. “They yell at me too much.”

A gentle smile formed on Skye’s face as she approached Grant and carefully took his bloodied hand, grimacing as she saw the jagged cut on his palm. “You need medical attention, Grant.” she pretty much whispered. “This looks bad. We’ll get it cleaned up and we’ll go get Max from the room, okay?”

Grant remained silent.

Skye gently took him by his other arm and started to lead him out of the room to find him someone that would patch up his hand, “You know, you really need to stop drinking like this. This is the third time I’ve found you drunk and I’ve only been here maybe a little over a week. I know you’re hurting, but this isn’t the way to cope. You’re only going to get yourself or someone else hurt. I know that Coulson’s a jackass, but trying to kill him isn’t going to get us anywhere at all.” She frowned as she noticed Grant’s blank expression, “You’re not going to remember any of this, are you?” she asked quietly. “We really need to get you out of here, but you’re going to have to work with everyone until then.”

“Sorry.” Grant mumbled, blindly reaching for her with his unscathed hand. “He said mean things. He wants me to die even though I already did.”

“Some people can’t get certain things through their head.” Skye muttered, leading him into the med bay, where of which a med agent quickly took notice of his bleeding hand and immediately ran over. “He cut his hand pretty badly on some glass,” she explained, turning her attention away from Grant. “And be careful, he’s drunk.”

The agent nodded and ushered for Grant to follow him, whom of which staggered after the man.

Skye bit her lip with worry as she watched several agents swarm Grant to get his hand cleaned up. “I had no idea it was this bad, Grant. I had no idea that you were sick. That must be why you’ve been acting so strange. Why didn’t you tell me? But I… I still can’t promise that we can find a way out of here soon. We still have to worry about May and Fitz.

“But you may be gone before we see the real world again.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so it's clear that Grant's starting to fall apart, even if he isn't drunk. And Grant accidentally tells Skye that he's dying, so how will that turn out? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Chapter Summary

Skye finds out the truth behind Grant's wellbeing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Morning)

Grant rubbed at his bandaged hand as he slipped out of his room at the base, Max right on his heels. Even though his head was killing him, he wanted to try and apologize to Skye for what she had seen the day before. Well, for what little of it he could remember. All he could remember was him snapping at Coulson and then threatening to kill him. And, honestly, he wasn’t sorry about that. He would never apologize for that. At least him being drunk was a good excuse for his actions.

He found her in an abandoned room all by herself, thanks to Max’s help. Taking a sharp breath, Grant stepped into the room and quietly shut the door behind him, turning around to see Skye looking at something on her computer. She must’ve come in here for some solitude due to everything that was going on lately. “Skye,” he began as she looked up. “I,”

“If you’re here to apologize for last night, don’t worry about it.” she cut in, gently closing her laptop. “You were drunk. And you couldn’t help that Coulson came to pester you at a time of weakness.” She watched as Grant took a seat in the chair opposite of her, Max sitting down right next to him on the floor. “That anger’s always been a pretty big issue for you, hasn’t it?”

Grant sighed and picked at his bandage. The stitches in his palm were really starting to itch. “The Berserker Staff wasn’t the beginning of it. And neither was my alcoholism.” he began, trying to avoid Skye’s gaze. “I guess it’s a result of what my family did to me. It’s a defensive response. If someone tries to hurt me or someone I care about, I snap. I can’t help it. And the alcohol definitely doesn’t help. Sorry you had to see any of that. If I said anything to you, I probably didn’t mean it.”

“Did you mean it when you said that you were dying?”

His stomach froze over at Skye’s words. That meant he had accidently told her the truth last night. The very thing that he had been trying to hide this entire time. Now, there was no skirting around the truth to it. Skye needed to know.

After a long period of silence, Grant finally gave her an answer. “Yes, I am.” he stated quietly. “I never wanted you to find that out. I never wanted to you to worry.”

“Why would you hide something like this?” There was a noticeable crack to her voice and something akin to genuine worry shone deep within her eyes. “I know that you said you were dealing with the effects of having two sets of memories. And that you’ve been having headaches and hallucinations. But death?”

Grant slowly nodded, “That’s the only thing I can figure out from all that’s happening to me. I’m breaking down because this world doesn’t want me here. I was never supposed to be here at all.
Something happened when this world was created and it put me in here against the program’s wishes or whatnot. Now it’s fighting back and is treating me like a virus. And it’ll get what it wants sooner or later. I probably won’t last to find a way out.” His voice broke and he looked up to the ceiling so Skye couldn’t see the fear in his eyes, “I’ve begun to accept the fact that I won’t get out. That I’m not going to get another chance. I willing to fight and claw my way out of here if I have to. But I don’t know if I even have a choice anymore.”

“Grant, I had… I had no idea.” There was worry clear in her voice. Something that she’d never thought that she would feel about him again. She was actually worried about Grant Ward of all people. “There’s nothing that can be done?”

He shook his head, “Not unless you speed this whole damn thing up and get us all out of here within the next three days or so. But that’s not happening.” he stated coldly. “You’ll be lucky if you can get to May by then. But Fitz is an entirely different story. He’ll take days to get to. I don’t have that kind of time left.”

Skye’s face fell as she still tried to process the fact that Grant was dying all over again. The very world he lived in now was trying to kill him. It was slowly destroying him and there would soon be nothing left of him. Grant would be lucky if he lived to see Saturday. It was already Tuesday.

“What… What are you going to do?” she asked softly, watching as Max laid on the floor and closed his eyes, completely unaware of what was truly going on.

“I’m not giving up. I made a promise and I’m going to keep it.” Grant stated, looking Skye dead in the eyes. “I may not have a chance anymore, but that doesn’t mean you don’t. I’ll still help you out of here. And, if I’m lucky, I’ll get a way out as well. But I’m no longer doing this for myself. You’re the main reason now. I at least want to see you and Fitz in a safer place. Mace too.” he continued. “Hopefully I’ll make it long enough to see that. But that’s a promise I can’t keep. I’ll probably be dead before the week’s over.”

“Grant, you can’t lose hope like that. There’s always a way. You-“

“There is no way, Skye!” Grant snapped, standing to his feet. “I’m not like you! I don’t have a body to return to! I was dead on arrival! There is no hope! Not anymore.” He turned from her and she could see the faintest hint of tears in his eyes.

Skye took a breath and stood up, “Grant, we’ll find a way.” she stated softly, walking over to him and placing a hand on his bicep. “Don’t give up just yet. We’ll find a way, even if it does happen to be unorthodox. As long as it works, I don’t care to what it is.”

Grant blinked and turned to face her again, “And can you promise that?” he whispered. “Or will you all just screw me over again in the end?”

She shook her head, “No, we won’t. I’ll make sure of it.” she stated softly. “We’ll find a way. There’s always a way.” She gently took his bandaged hand and looked up at him, “But you can’t keep doing things like this. You’ll end up killing yourself before this world can. If we’re to get out of here, we need you at full strength. We need Grant Ward the protector. Can you still be him?”

He looked down and was quiet for a moment before his answer came. “Yeah. I can.” he stated. “Even if I’m dying, that doesn’t mean that you can’t get out of here. I’ll help. And… And maybe there will be a chance for me.”
Skye smiled up at him and there was a faint hint of a blush on Grant’s freckled cheeks. “Good. Now let’s go see if we can get to May, okay?” she asked. “It’s now or never.”

He nodded, “Yeah, let’s go.”

The two then walked out of the room, hand in hand, with Max happily running after them.

Chapter End Notes

I know that it's a little short, but my knee is really starting to bother me now. So I kind of had to wrap it up. But it reveals a lot. Skye knows why Grant's dying. Grant still vows to help her and the others out, even if he dies beforehand. Now it's just a matter of when Grant's last day is. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Chapter Summary

A plan is made to rescue May.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Day)

“Are you insane?! That’s never going to work! A plan like that is only going to get all of us killed!”

Mace took a breath and shot a glare towards Grant, “Ward, I know that it’s dangerous, but it’s our only chance at getting to May without having to raid Hydra’s headquarters.” he began lightly. “We have no other choice if we’re to get out of here within the next week.”

Grant blinked and gritted his teeth, “An Inhuman intake center is bound to have a heavy guard presence, we’ll be slaughtered.” he practically snapped. “I’d like to be able to get out of this fucking place. I’m not going to die here.”

“Grant,” Skye began, casting a worried glance towards him. He was being reckless and hotheaded, and it seemed that he had gotten worse ever since he had told her the truth about his wellbeing the day before. “Mace is right. It may be dangerous, but it’s our only chance to get May. The intake center may have guards there, but they’re not prepared to deal with an attack from the outside. If we have enough firepower on our side, then we’ll have the upper hand. We get May and if we’re lucky, we’ll rescue some Inhumans that can help us get to Fitz later on.”

“Yes, that’s what I’m saying.” Mace agreed with a nod of his head. “An intake center is small. They’re not prepared to deal with an onslaught. They’re only prepared to deal with Inhumans from the inside, not the outside. If we plan this carefully enough, we’ll be able to do it. There will be a team back at a surveillance location and then we’ll have the strike team.”

“Who’s on what?” Coulson asked, keeping his gaze solely on Mace. He refused to acknowledge that Grant was in the room, especially after the other day’s events.

“The surveillance team will consist of you, Simmons, and Mack. The strike team will be me, Ward, Daisy, and Triplett. And we’ll have to brief Triplett on this later since we have to come up with a different explanation for him.” Mace explained. “He can’t know the truth to why we’re really going to kidnap a high-ranking Hydra official.”

“Then what do we tell him?” Mack asked, crossing his arms. “Hell, what do we tell my daughter?”

“We’ll say that we’ve found an opportunity to ‘obtain’ a Hydra official that we can hopefully sway to our side.” Grant spoke up, turning his attention to Mack. “And said official can hopefully help us take Hydra down right at its, source. Which will all know to be Fitz and this AIDA robot lady. It’s not really that hard of an explanation.”

“I suppose you’re right.” Mack trailed off and looked away. He still refused to acknowledge what would come of them all leaving the Framework. He would lose his daughter once again. Even
though he now had happy memories of her, he knew that losing her again would only break him again. And it even hurt worse to know that someone like Grant was getting to live while his own daughter didn’t. Then again, Hope was only a construct of the Framework. As far as Mack knew, there was no way to get her out. And he really didn’t want to do that to her. Suppose losing her here was the best way to go.

Mace nodded, “We’ll head out first thing tomorrow morning.” he stated. “The strike team will head out in the quinjet while the surveillance team will take one of the vans and head to the location that I will give you tomorrow. Hopefully this mission will go smoothly and we won’t lose anyone. Remember, if you die here, you die in the real world as well.” He took a sharp breath and gulped, “You’re all dismissed.” He looked over towards Grant, “Except you, Ward. I’d like to speak with you for a moment.” His eyes flickered briefly towards Skye, “And just the two of us.”

Grant’s breath hitched in his chest as everyone started filing out around them. Skye gave him a knowing and caring look before she left. Honestly, just what would Mace want to talk to him about? He really wasn’t his right-hand man anymore.

“Ward,” Mace began, turning towards the man and crossing his arms over his chest. “Is everything going okay with you? You’ve been acting differently lately.”

“You just seem to be snappier these past few days and you’re in some huge rush to get out of here. Is there something wrong that I need to know about?”

Grant immediately shook his head, “No, I’m fine.” he stated coldly. “It’s just that I’m worried that we won’t be able to make it out of here. Then you’re making some rash plan to invade an intake center. I’m just afraid to die again, Mace. I want to be able to live a normal life.”

Mace nodded slowly as though he understood what Grant was saying, “We’re all afraid, Ward. This is as close to real life as we can get right now. We still die, even if we get hurt here. So we must be careful. I know my plan is a little rash and dangerous, but it’s our only hope of getting May back. I want to see us all get out of here, Ward. And I know that you’re probably the most eager of us all.”

“I’ve been here far too long.” Grant stated, looking away. “I just want to get out of here before something can happen. Either one of us is going to die or we’re just not going to be able to get out. My worst fear is that the others will throw me aside and won’t allow me to escape. I just want to find my own life somewhere that doesn’t involve violence. And none of them, except Skye, seem to believe that.”

“Ward, after what happened between you and them, I’m surprised that they haven’t tried anything against you yet.” Mace said with a sigh. “But, for right now, I trust you. You were my right-hand man for a reason. Right now, the outside world doesn’t matter, so I don’t care what you did out there. I know that there’s a good man in you somewhere. The others may think that you’re some kind of monster, but I don’t see it. You’re still the Framework you to me. Make sure you stay that way.”

Grant sighed and nodded, “I intend to.” he replied meekly. “I’m not going back to what I was, not again. I was a monster and I want to let that die. I... I don’t care if the others forgive me or not, but I made Skye a promise. I promised to at least get her and Fitz out of here, and I fully intend on doing that. My intentions may be a little self-centered since I’m mainly concerned about my survival, but I still want to help them. Even if all of them don’t care for me anymore.”

Mace turned his head away for a second and didn’t say anything. He returned his gaze to Grant and
gave him a small smile, “If it’s worth anything, I do believe you.” he stated. “So you better keep that promise.”

“Yes, sir.”

Grant went to leave, but Mace stopped him once more.

“Oh, and, Ward?”

“Yeah?” Grant asked, turning back around to face Mace.

“If anything ends up happening to me before we get out, I want you to take up my mantle.”

Grant blinked, dumbfounded, “You want me to be the Patriot?”

Mace immediately shook his head, “No, not that. The Resistance. SHIELD. If… If I don’t make it, the roll of Director falls on you, Grant. No matter what Coulson says. We may not be our Framework selves anymore, but you’re still my second-in-command. This SHIELD will be yours to lead if something happens to you.”

“Mace, don’t act like something’s going to happen. I know I’m fucking scared, but truly thinking something is going to happen is a little much.” Grant deadpanned, his face pale. “We’ll probably all make it.”

“I said if. This is just all protocol. It’s still a pretty big raid, anything could happen.” Mace continued. “I’m just stating fact. I have no doubt that we’ll all be okay. I just have to clear things up, okay?”

Grant nodded shakily, “Yes, sir.”

“Good. Now don’t fail us tomorrow.

We can’t afford to lose anything at all.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I totally meant to update last night, but I’ve somehow got tonsillitis or something and ended up not feeling very good. But I managed tonight. So... With that last part you can tell that I’ve strayed towards canon with trying to get May, unfortunately. I had to look at canon to get some ideas and that’s what popped up. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
An Execution Crawls in Your Mind

Chapter Summary

Everything goes to hell.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

(The Next Day)

Grant grimaced as shots rang out from the floor above him. Hydra really had begun to fight back against SHIELD’s siege against the Inhuman intake center and it really was starting to go south. No one had been able to find May yet and Hydra soldiers were slowly starting to overtake the small facility and Grant was sure that he had already lost a few men. In all honestly, he knew they were going to lose and Hydra was going to get all of them.

Grant knew that he himself would be thrown into prison for helping the enemy and probably executed. Skye would end up being experimented on and eventually thrown aside like trash. Neither of them would end up seeing the light of the real world again. There were no second chances here.

“Skye! We’re going to have to grab May when we can and get the hell out of here!” Grant shouted above the sound of gunfire. “There’s no helping these Inhumans! And it’s not like it matters anyways. They’re not the ones fighting to get back to reality.”

Skye took a sharp breath as she began to process what Grant had said. They really needed to get out of here soon or the entirety of the SHIELD strike force would be decimated by Hydra’s forces. There was no room for failure here.

“Look, no one can find May. So we’re not even sure that she’s here.” Skye began to explain. “Maybe we got the intel wrong or something. I-I don’t know what the hell to do, Grant. Mack, Simmons, and Coulson are in a safe place. But we’re not. Mace isn’t. Maybe we should just cut our losses and get the hell out of here. We’ll get May later.”

Grant shook his head. “There is no later.” he stated coldly. “If we don’t find her now, she remains in this world. And it’s not like I’ve got the time anyways. If I don’t get out of here soon, I’ll be dead by the time the week’s over. We get her now.”

Skye studied Grant’s face, seeing the worry and determination etched upon it. Grant was determined to ensure that everyone made it alive, even though no one else but her cared about him. He still wanted to fulfill the promise that he had made her. He still wanted to be the hero at the end of the day.

“Grant, I don’t even think that she’s here.”

“She has to be.” Grant snapped, turning away from her and placing a hand to his ear to activate his comms. “Mace, what’s your status?” he asked. “Have you found her yet?”

A couple seconds of silence passed before Mace’s voice crackled in his ear, “Unfortunately, no. I think she fled the moment we hit this place. I-” Mace was cut off as the building suddenly shook...
violently and a loud boom sounded. “Shit. They’re bombing this place, Grant. We need to go. Now. But I need your help first. I’ve got a group of Inhumans here, some have been through Terrigenesis. If we can get them out of here, then we have more of an army to fight back and get May and Fitz back. I need your help to get them though.” He paused. “Some rubble fell on a few of them and I can’t get them alone. I’ll need help.”

Grant blinked and his stomach churned. He briefly looked back to Skye before he answered, “What about Skye?” he asked quietly. “Does she need to come?”

“No. We can’t risk Hydra getting her. They know that she’s Inhuman, she needs to be back at the base.” Mace answered. “Tell her to get back to Coulson’s location. Now. I’m on the second floor.”

The comms shut off and Grant turned back towards Skye.

Skye raised an eyebrow, “So?”

Grant shook his head, “Mace thinks May fled soon after we started attacking. We need to fall back.” he stated, reaching for the pistol that hung from his side. “He wants you to fall back to Coulson’s location. I have to help him with a group of Inhumans first.”

“Why do I need to fall back?!” Skye demanded. “I can help, too!”

“It’s because Hydra knows you’re Inhuman, Skye!” Grant snapped, fear shining in his eyes. “Once they figure you’re here, they’ll be after you. It’s best that you run. I don’t want you getting killed.”

“I can handle things, Ward.” Skye stated coldly. “I can fight.”

“But not against a legion of trained Hydra soldiers.” Grant slowly approached her and placed his hands on her shoulders, looking straight into her eyes, “I don’t want to lose you. Not again.”

“Grant, I,”

“Skye, please. Honestly, at this point, it doesn’t matter if I get out or not.” he said softly, the building shaking with another explosion. “But it does for you. If I got out and you were left behind…. ” He shook his head, “I couldn’t live with myself. You need to get to where it’s safe.

I know that you can fight, but this isn’t the place to do it. Fall back. I promise that I’ll try my best to get back, but Mace needs my help first.”

Skye took a sharp breath and studied him for a few seconds before responding, “Fine. But don’t get killed.” she stated. “I… I want to see you get out as well. Don’t die after all we’ve been through.”

Grant smiled and turned, “Good, now go. I hear them coming. Get out of here before they flood this place.” he stated before dashing off and leaving Skye where she was. Skye froze for a moment before she fled, finding an escape out via an emergency exit.

Grant ran up the stairs of a fire exit, trying to find a way around the soldiers so he could get to where Mace was. Another explosion rocked the building, causing Grant to lose his footing and fall to the ground just as he reached the top of the stairs. He stared at the door as screams rang out. He didn’t want to know what was on the other side of that door.

Either he was running straight into a squad of soldiers or something happening during the previous explosion. Grant honestly preferred the latter in this case. He took a sharp breath and jumped to his feet, bolting out the door and into a clearing.
The cloudy sky shone above through a massive hole in the ceiling and rubble littered the floor. Grant’s eyes went to a group of whom he presumed to be Inhumans, all dirtied and bloodied, standing near an area where the ceiling caved in. His breath hitched in his chest as he noticed something seemed to be holding a fallen pillar up.

Grant moved in almost a mechanical way as he made his way over the pillar, the Inhumans parting and falling back as they realized that he wasn’t Hydra.

“They’re trapped in there.” one muttered. “The pillar just fell and he jumped in there.”

Grant stopped and immediately turned towards the rubble, his stomach falling as he realized just who was holding the pillar up.

Mace.

“Grant,” Mace stated, his voice pained. “Help me get these kids out of here.” Grant now noticed two kids in the hole, one’s leg bent in a painful direction. “The others are hurt and can’t exert themselves. Can’t hold this for much longer.”

“Mace, we’ve got to get out of here.” Grant stated numbly as he slid down into the hole. “This place is going to fall at any minute.” He smiled at one of the kids and gently picked him up.

“I know. I’m the one holding this room up.”

Grant’s stomach fell as he helped the child up over the edge and into the waiting arms of the other Inhumans. “Meaning this place will fall if you move.”

Mace nodded the best he could, “I can hold it up long enough for these people to get the hell out of here, but it’ll soon fall.” He watched as Grant helped the young Inhuman with the broken leg. “Grant, I’m not making it out of here.”

“What?” Bile rose in Grant’s throat as one of the Inhumans took the injured child from him. He turned, fear in his face, “Everyone’s supposed to make it out. If you die,”

“I’ll die in real life. I know. But as soon as I move, this room will fall on me. There’s no making it out.”

“Look, we can find some other way.” Grant protested. “It doesn’t have to end like this.”

“There’s no other way, Grant. I’m sorry. At least I can die knowing that I helped you all out and that I was an actual hero in this world.” Mace explained slowly, grunting as the pillar shifted. He knew that it would soon fall. “You need to survive to ensure the others make it as well. Take those Inhumans and go. Now.”

“What… What does this mean for SHIELD?” Grant asked, shaking his head over and over. He refused to believe that this was happening. It should be him dying, not Mace.

“You tell me that, Director.”

Grant’s stomach dropped, “I-I know you explained this to me, but I’m not suited for it. I can’t-”

“Grant, you’ll be fine. Now get those people to safety and escape. This mission was a failure, I-”

“I’ll accept responsibility.” Grant cut in. “This is my fault. I should’ve been here sooner.”

“It’s not your fault, Grant. It’s Hydra’s. Now go. Please.”
Grant slowly made his way out of the hole and he turned to face the group of Inhumans, “There’s a fire escape over there.” he said, pointing towards the door he had just come out of. “It’ll take you to a small room which leads straight outside. Keep going until you reach the treeline. There’s a group of agents there waiting. Now go. Hydra will be here soon.”

He watched as the Inhumans quickly scurried towards the exit and he turned back towards Mace, “Sir,”

“Grant, go. Don’t worry about me. That’s your one flaw. You care about others way too much.” Mace paused and sighed, “The others need you more than I do. That’s my last order. Make sure they get out of here. Don’t fail me on that.”

Grant nodded mechanically and took one last look at Mace before running back towards the exit. He slipped out of the room just as the ceiling came caving in. He fell to his knees knowing that Mace more than likely was dead.

It should have been him, he believed. He was the monster here, not Mace. Mace had done nothing to deserve a death like this. Even if it was a heroic one in the end.

Shouts sounded as boots rumbled against the stairs and Grant slowly looked up as Hydra soldiers came spilling from the stairway, surrounding him. What had happened to the Inhumans? Had they escaped? Grant really didn't want to know. Nothing mattered to him right now.

“Maybe they got out. I don't know.” he thought. “But either way, I'm fucked.”

Grant lowered his head as he accepted his fate, a soldier coming forward to arrest him. He didn't care, everything was numb and Grant couldn't think. Hydra had wanted him from the start. All because he was SHIELD. A practical monster in their book.

And all he believed was that he was the reason Mace had died and that he had screwed them all over. That there had been another way and he did not see it.

And now he would burn for being the monster Hydra truly thought he was.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah. Unfortunately I started to incorporate canon things in there. Hence Mace. So Grant's now the director of the Framework SHIELD, but has been captured by Hydra. And if you think of who was captured in canon and think what happened to them, you'll know what will happen to Grant. You'll also know if you've seen my other fics. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Grant moaned as he peeled his eyes open to a dim light shining above him. He struggled to sit up against what seemed to be a cold, concrete wall behind him. His thoughts came few and far between as he struggled to remember what had happened. He moaned against as a sharp, burning pain lanced through his veins.

Imagines of heavily armed guards flashed through his mind and what seemed to be his own screams flashed through as well. Grant could vaguely remember being strapped to some kind of chair while something began to burn him. But that’s all he could remember between the Hydra guards surrounding him at the intake center and now.

Mace.

The memory roared through his head like a train. He could’ve found a way to save Mace, but had failed in the end. Mace had wanted him to run and get the Inhumans out of there, but what would’ve happened if he had stayed instead?

“No, they… They’d all be dead if I did. Including me.” Grant thought, struggling to keep himself upright. “Those Inhumans… If they made it, they would’ve told the others about what happened. Surely they’ve figured out that I’ve been captured. I don’t think the entire building collapsed and those Inhumans know that I escaped. S.H.I.E.L.D has to be looking for me.”

Grant looked up at the concrete ceiling, seeing the lone, bare bulb hanging from it. He looked around what he had already figured out to be a cell. Nothing else was in the room except for him. Hydra must’ve thrown him in here after they were finished doing whatever they had done to him.

He wondered if Hydra knew that Mace was dead. He knew that they couldn’t know he was now Director, unless they could figure things out. Him being Mace’s right-hand probably wasn’t something unknown to them. They could follow a chain of command. And Grant knew that things would be so much worse for him if they knew he was Director. He wasn’t sure of how this situation could get any worse.

“Hopefully at least the others made it. God, tell me Skye made it out. Please. I can't lose her now. And she can figure out a way to get me out of here.” he thought. “If… If the others don’t refuse to help. We still didn’t get May. They’re gonna blame me for the failure even though she was gone before the ceiling caved in. I’m the victim here.”

Grant shifted and heard a clank from below. He looked down to see that his wrists were cuffed together. It wasn’t like he could get out of here anyways. The only ways out were a heavy, steel door
and what seemed to be a two-way mirror. And even if he could get out, there was no chance of him being able to acquire any weapons. And that’s if there weren’t guards standing outside the door right now. He figured that there were.

“Fuck.” He leaned his head back against the wall and stared up at the bare ceiling. “I’m screwed. They’ll transfer me somewhere else to be executed for treason. I am the leader of the enemy organization after all.”

He sat there for what seemed like ages before the door rattled and swung open. He looked up to see who was coming into the room and his entire world shattered.

Fitz.

Fitz looked at him with cold, dead eyes as he came into the room, a guard bringing in a chair behind him. He took a seat and returned his attention to the cuffed Grant, “It’s not every day when we get a high-ranking SHIELD agent in our custody, but here we are.” Fitz’s voice was void of any emotion and Grant couldn’t even recognize the man. This wasn’t the engineer from the other world.

What had happened to him?

Fitz took Grant’s silence and terror as an answer, “Now, in this case, Madame Hydra would be the one to ‘interrogate’ you, but she’s busy with another matter.” he stated matter of factly. “So I came.”

“Well, I’m honored.” Grant deadpanned through a forced smile. He didn’t want to say anything to Fitz about what was really going on. Not yet. He wanted to see if the man could remember him or not before he did so.

“You’re not in a situation where you can have an attitude, that’ll only make things worse.” Fitz answered, staring straight into his eyes. “ Especially with what we just found out a few moments ago, in addition to the results from earlier.”

Grant gulped as Fitz stood to his feet and began to pace around the room. What results? What results could Fitz be talking about?

“It turns out that Jeffery Mace was killed in that little attack this morning. Meaning SHIELD lost its Director and a new one was appointed by default.” Fitz stopped and looked towards Grant again, “And we found out that the job lies on your shoulders now.” A twitch pulled at his lips, “Meaning we have the Director of SHIELD in our custody. Do you know what that means for your precious organization?”

“Humor me.”

Another twitch appeared on Fitz’s face, “It means they’re without leadership. An organization without leadership is one destined to fail. We’ll get its secrets out of you and SHIELD will fail in no time.” he explained. “And then you’ll be sent for execution for being such a monster.”

A smile pulled at Grant’s lips as he saw the perfect opportunity to get through to Fitz, “Funny. That’s not the first time I’ve been called that.” he stated with a smirk. He shifted his bound wrists, “I don’t think I’m a hero or anything. I know what I am. I know that I’ve done some horrible shit in my life. Hell,” He paused and swallowed, “I’ve even dropped two scientists out of a plane before. And one… He almost died. He wasn’t the same after that.”

It hurt Grant for him to recall that fact. That memory was something he liked to keep under lock and key. But it was something that could possibly get through to Fitz since it was such a major event for him.
“I know that I’m a monster.” Grant continued, looking Fitz straight in the eyes. “I’ve killed people. I’ve lied and betrayed the ones that thought I was a good man. You don’t have to tell me twice.”

A strange light shone in Fitz’s eyes as his face fell and confusion set in. He looked at Grant for a few agonizing moments, something pulling at the back of his mind, before shaking his head and glaring at the man. “You realize that your words mean nothing, right?” he deadpanned. “We know that you’re a monster through and through. You don’t have to explain it to us.”

Grant frowned and realized that it wasn’t enough. He figured that he should go full-throttle with everything since he knew that he really had no other choice. “Look,” Grant looked dead into Fitz’s cold eyes. “I know you. Your name is Leopold Fitz. You’re a SHIELD scientist. Your girlfriend’s name is Jemma Simmons. Whatever the hell this getup is, this isn’t you. It’s far from you.”

Fitz frowned and hate seeped into his eyes, “I don’t know where the hell you are getting this stuff. I figure you know my name because you were high up in SHIELD’s command. But I am not a SHIELD scientist. And I don’t even know who the hell ‘Jemma Simmons’ is.

I believe that everything’s going to your head and you’re losing it. You don’t know me.” he continued coldly. “But I suggest that you shut it before you make it even worse for yourself.”

“How much fucking worse could it get?!” Grant demanded, his anger rising due to irritation. “I’m stuck in a Hydra cell! I’m stuck in a fake world that’s killing me as we speak! I’ve lost everything that I cared for here! And now I can’t even get through to someone I once called friend! It can’t get any worse than this!”

That same twitch from earlier pulled at Fitz’s lips again as he sat back down and leaned towards Grant, “You don’t realize how much trouble you’re in, right?” he asked, his voice emotionless once again. “In addition to being the leader of a terrorist organization, your very existence is a crime.” Both fear and hatred shone in his eyes.

“I don’t understand what you’re getting at.”

“You see, I don’t think you remember much from these past few hours. You were in and out of consciousness for a long time. So I think you forget the tests we ran on you earlier.” Fitz stated through gritted teeth. “And we discovered something very important about you.” He turned his gaze away, “Your kind deserves to be locked away. You are all monsters. You need to be dealt with before you turn into a weapon of mass destruction.”

Grant’s face fell and his stomach began to churn, “W-What do you mean?” he stammered, not really wanting to know where Fitz was going with this. He knew that whatever it was meant his end. “I’m not that kind of monster. What are you saying?”

Fitz looked back at him, hate and fear still brewing in his eyes. His mouth was a fine line as he watched Grant stare back at him, “You know very well what I’m saying. Your organization has been hiding your kind from us for years.

You’re Inhuman.”

Chapter End Notes

And, yeah. I was gonna take this route sooner or later, so better to do this now. So Grant
wakes up to a practical interrogation with Fitz himself. Oh, and finds out via Fitz that he's Inhuman. Overall, Grant's just having a crappy day. Keep the comments and kudos coming! (And I'll get to Fire in the Sky in the next few days!)
In My Time of Dying

Chapter Summary

Everything falls apart.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Elsewhere, Current Time)

Skye looked up as the sound of a jingle rang out in the room. A small, yet sad, smile appeared on her face as she saw Max coming up to her, obviously trying to figure out why his other owner wasn’t here.

No one really knew what had happened to Grant.

“T’im sorry, boy.” Skye croaked, reaching out to pet the shepherd between his ears. “I don’t know where Grant’s at. And I don’t know if he’s going to make it back.” A single tear slid down her cheek. “Everything’s been screwed up because of what happened.”

And that was the complete and utter truth. Mace was dead and Grant was MIA, presumably captured by Hydra. SHIELD had been able to recover Mace’s body, but hadn’t been able to find Grant’s. They had to call a retreat and get out of there, leaving them behind. But Skye had known that everything had happened before the retreat. There had been no helping what had happened at all.

Max blinked and looked up at her, his big, brown eyes shining in the gloom of the room. Of course he didn’t know what was going on. He was a dog after all. All he knew was that Grant wasn’t present and that Skye was sad for some reason.

“Maybe you’re the only good thing here.” Skye whispered. “Everyone blames Grant for what happened and of course that anger is being directed towards me since he’s not here. Grant couldn’t help that May fled and a strike was ordered. He couldn’t help that the place collapsed on itself. Grant was just trying his best in a world that absolutely hates him.”

Skye really hadn’t known what to do since Grant had gone missing. Even though the leadership of the Framework SHIELD was supposed to fall onto Grant’s shoulders, Coulson had been insistent on taking charge. And, truly, it wasn’t his place to do so since it wasn’t his SHIELD. Skye had told them it was best that they just put all of their leadership skills together and not worry about having a physical leader.

But Coulson hadn’t listened.

He didn’t care that Grant was more than likely in Hydra custody. It just got rid of a threat once again. Coulson couldn’t see that Grant wanted to help. Grant had fueled his fear of dying into trying to get them all out. He didn’t really care about the others’ wellbeing, but he had made a promise to Skye. And that was something he had intended on fulfilling if he didn’t die first.

But now, Grant may not even get that chance.
A knock sounded at the room’s door and Skye looked up to see Mack. Of course it wouldn’t be Coulson or Simmons. Not in this case.

“How you doing?” he asked, coming over and sitting in the chair across from her. “You’ve been hiding ever since we got back.”

Skye shrugged, “I don’t know.” she mumbled, watching as Max turned to look at Mack. “I just feel kind of empty.”

Mack nodded, “You know, I’m not the biggest fan of Ward, but I do see that he wants to help. So I’m not putting up a fuss. And we’ve taken a really big hit with him going missing.” he explained. “He’s the one that knows the most about this world, after all.”

“At least you understand.” Skye said, looking off into the distance. “Coulson thinks it’s all Grant’s fault that Mace was killed and the rescue was botched.”

“I think Coulson tends to make Ward the scapegoat in any given situation.”

“He always thinks that Grant’s to blame. Ever since he escaped right after we sent him to his brother. And Grant just wants to help now. He made me a promise. I know that part of him is doing it for himself since he’s dying, but he still wants to help me. And by default, that makes him want to help us.” Skye explained, keeping her gaze off of Mack. “He’s not the monster anymore.”

Mack nodded once more, “I see that. We’ve got bigger issues than whatever’s currently running through Ward’s messed-up head.” he stated. “But we… We still need him if we’re going to get out of here. Maybe he’s the key to getting to May.”

“I don’t know…”

With a sigh, Mack began to study the sadness that had set into Skye’s face, “Daisy, do you like him again?” he asked quietly. “I’m not going to judge you for whatever you say.”

Skye looked up and stared at him for a few seconds, “I… I don’t know how I feel. I hated him when I got here. But now? Now I’m not so sure.” she answered. “I don’t hate him anymore and I finally realized just how much he needed help before. Everything’s just too complicated right now.”

“That’s understandable. We’re all going through too much right now.” Mack replied, giving a small smile as Max trotted over towards him. “Guess you really can’t think about your feelings about him right now. We need to get him back first.”

“Yeah…” Skye trailed off and grew silence. She really wasn’t sure of how far her feelings for Grant went right now. She knew she liked him again, but wasn’t sure of just how much she did so.

“Maybe I do love him again. I don’t know.” she thought. “I wouldn’t be this worried over him if I didn’t. But Mack’s right, we need to get him back first. And maybe he is the key to getting to May as well.

I just hope that Hydra doesn’t kill him first.”

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(The Triskellion)
Grant stared at Fitz once the answer had come out of his mouth, “I’m what?” he asked, struggling to believe what Fitz had just said.

“I said that you’re Inhuman.” Fitz stated through gritted teeth. “The final results are still being calculated, so we’re not quite sure of what your powers are. But as far as we can tell, they’ll be quite destructive. So you need to be dealt with before they’re able to come to life.”

“You can’t kill me, Fitz!” Grant snapped, struggling against his restraints. “So what if I’m Inhuman?! This isn’t you! You’re not some kind of deranged killer.” He looked away, “You’re not supposed to be me.”

Fitz blinked again he frowned, “Again, I do not know where you’re getting this delusion from.” he stated coldly. “I’ve never known you.”

“You’ve got to wake up, Fitz! That robot’s got you under her programming or something! She’s made it to where you follow whatever she says and you don’t remember a damn thing about who you really are!”

“Maybe we should rethink how you die.” Fitz spat. “Maybe we shouldn’t just execute you. We’ll just torture information out of you until you die from your injuries. That’s a fitting role for a traitor like you.”

Grant’s eyes widened in shock and in anger, “You aren’t a killer!” he screamed. “Fitz, I know you.” His voice calmed and he looked the man straight in the eyes, “If you do this, I know that you won’t be able to live it down. You have the biggest heart out of all of us.”

“But I don’t have remorse for a freak of nature like you.” Fitz hissed, glaring at him. “Nor do I have remorse for the leader of a terrorist organization. Things like you deserve to rot in hell.” He turned and faced the door, motioning for the guards to open it, “Armed guards will be here in thirty minutes to take you into interrogation. You better be thinking of what you can tell the interrogator. And savor the last moments of your pathetic little life.”

Grant’s throat grew dry as the steel door swung open and Fitz stalked out. As the door began to close, Grant’s eyes caught a figure standing right outside.

May.

His face fell, seeing that remorse shown on her face and something akin to recognition shown in her eyes. But things hadn’t quite cleared up in her mind yet. She hadn’t fully remembered who he was.

“May!” he screamed. “I know that you know who I am! I know that I’m a piece of shit or whatever the hell you want to call me, but you can’t let this happen! I know where the others are! We can get out of here! I-“

He was cut off as the door slammed shut and May faded from view. Grant slumped back against the wall, defeated. His mind was trying to process everything from the last ten minutes.

One, he was a dormant Inhuman.

Two, he was about to go to his death.

Three, May was just outside of his reach.

Four, everything was about to go to hell.
“Shit, Grant, think!” he thought, looking up to the bare ceiling. “There has to be a way out of here. But I’ve got no weapons. I can’t fight an army.”

His heart skipped a beat as a thought formed in his head, “But I am a weapon.” He looked around the room, “I refuse to believe that I’m not human, but… But it may be my way out of here. If I could just get my hands on a Terrigen Crystal. That’s all I need.

Fitz said that my powers were going to be destructive in nature. So that’s my key out of here. If I can somehow get a Crystal and manage to break it before getting killed, I’ll be in the clear. Then I can get the hell out of here and grab May along the way. I…”

His thoughts went silent as he realized that there was one, big flaw in his plan: There was no way to get his hands on a Crystal. Any that Hydra had in containment was more than likely locked away in some kind of vault awaiting destruction. He had to be some high-ranking Hydra official to get into them.

So, in all honesty, he was shit out of luck. He was locked in here with no way out. There would be no way to go through Terrigenesis and he would die before help could come.

It was truly Grant Ward’s final moments.

Chapter End Notes

So we've got Skye's reaction to Grant going missing. And Grant doesn't know how to react. He thinks he can get out of there if he could just go through Terrigenesis, but has no way to do so. (You might see what I'm trying to do here.) So can he escape? (And I know Grant's reaction to being Inhuman is lacking, but he really doesn't have time to react right now.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Everybody Down, Gonna Burn it to the Ground

Chapter Summary

And hell on Earth is unleashed. Literally.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The minutes slowly crept by for Grant, each one dragging out longer and longer. And with each minute, his fear grew exponentially. He knew that this was the end. He would be beaten and tortured for information until he was dead. This was never the way he dreamed he would go. Again.

Now, he wasn’t sure of how much time had passed by now. It could’ve been five minutes or twenty-five minutes, but it was still close until the time the soldiers were supposed to come and drag him away. Fitz had said he had thirty minutes from the time he had left the room. All Grant knew was that he had little time left. And not even a miracle could save him now.

Grant tried his best to pry his thoughts away from his impending death. He tried to think of Skye, but all it did was make things worse. All he could think of was how she would possibly react to his death. Had they figured out what had happened to him? Did they think that he had died in the rubble? Honestly, there was no telling to what they thought. All he knew was that Skye was more than likely the only one that cared. Everyone else would want him to burn in hell again. And hadn’t he already done enough of that?

He leaned his head back against the moist concrete behind him and closed his eyes, trying to block everything out. Soon, the only quiet he would have would be death, he at least wanted to savor this for as long as he could. He brought his bound wrists up so he could sit them in his lap.

Oh, why must he suffer so? He couldn’t find any happiness in any life. All he wanted was to escape here and live a quiet life all on his own. And now he couldn’t even get that. It was like the universe was out to get him, even after he had already died.

But maybe this was a better way to go than the Framework itself breaking him down to nothing. Grant didn’t want to know how he would be if the computer got its way. He’d probably be insane and unable to do anything. Maybe death by Hydra was a better way to go. At least he was going down as the Director of SHIELD. Even if it was in an alternate reality.

Now, maybe he should just accept his fate and wait for the inevitable.

Another eternity passed before the door clanked open. Grant’s eyes snapped open, expecting to see several guards now in the room, but he only saw one, lone figure.

May.

She closed the door behind her and turned to look at him, a blank expression on her face, “We have five minutes before the other guards realizing what I’m doing.” she stated, taking a step towards him. “So we better get this going.”

Grant raised an eyebrow, “So what are you doing in here?” he asked, not sure if she remembered yet
“Come to give me a final meal?”

“I’ve come to give you a possible way out.”

Grant’s stomach froze over, “What?” he croaked out. “What... What do you remember?”

May stared at him blankly, “Look, I don’t know who the hell you are, but I have this feeling that I’m supposed to help you. Even though another feeling is telling me that you’re bad news.” she said. “But I know... I know that Hydra is bad news as well and that I’m not supposed to be here, so I think that overrules that.”

“Look, I may be Director or whatnot here, but that’s not the case. This world? It’s all a lie. A computer program fabricated by a deranged AI to keep the team locked in here.” Grant tried to explain, his eyes on the door. “You? You’re not a high-ranking Hydra official. You’re SHIELD’s second-in-command in the real world.”

May’s face fell slightly, “Then who are you?”

“I don’t think you want to know that. But I’m dead in the other world. I was looking for a way out. The others... No, Skye, came here and that gave me a way. I made her a promise that I would help everyone else out, even though I hate them all.” Grant looked away, “Now I can’t do anything now that I’m here. This world’s fucked-up. All I wanted was a little peace and quiet for once.”

“Look, I know that something is wrong with this place, but I could never place a finger on what it was.” May blinked and took a step towards him, “But if what you say is correct, then I’m just a prisoner here.” She shook her head, “And I’ve done things here I know I would never do.”

“May, whoever you are here, it isn’t you. You,”

“I ordered the strike on that intake center.” she cut in, her voice practically a mutter. “I was the one who got the Patriot killed.”

Grant’s face fell, his stomach beginning to churn once more. He realized that that one event was possibly what caused May to begin to wake up. She wasn’t fully broken through to and Grant knew he couldn’t do it. But if he could get her out of here and back to SHIELD, then maybe someone else could do it. But he knew that it wasn’t her fault. He knew what it was like to be controlled.

“Then help me out of here. I’ll help you back to SHIELD. We’ll help you. Then you can get revenge for what happened today.” Grant said in a low voice. “And make up for Mace’s death. And it’s still not your fault, it’s the programming’s fault. We need you back.” He paused for a second, “Coulson needs you back.”

May’s head perked up at the sound of Coulson’s name, but she shook her head to clear it away. She took another step towards Grant and pulled something out of her pocket, “Now, this is dangerous, but it’s the only way. And if the results are correct, then this’ll cause a lot of damage to Hydra in the process.”

Grant frowned as he tried to make out what was in May’s hand. And he completely froze over once he realized what she held.

A Terrigen Crystal.

So his only way out was to change. But what would he be like afterwards? Would he even look like himself? Grant was afraid to find out, but if it was the only way out, then he would do it.
“You want me to change.”

A statement, not a question.

May stared at him, “It’s the only way to get you out of here while causing damage to Hydra.” she answered, crouching down. “I know that it’s unpredictable, but the results are usually correct most of the time.”

“Results?” May handed him the Crystal and she began to unlock his cuffs. “Wait, what did they say? What the hell am I supposed to be?”

The cuffs dropped to the floor and she stood to her feet, taking a few steps back, “I guess that you’ll see for yourself.” she stated, heading back towards the door. “Wait a minute before breaking that. I don’t wait to get caught in the potential blast.”

Grant’s mouth grew dry as he watched May head back out the door. The door slammed shut and he was left by himself all over again. Now, he probably had only a minute or two before the real guards came to take him away.

He stared at the Crystal in his hands. What had May meant by ‘potential blast’? It was obvious that she knew what his powers would be, the testing machines took care of that already. He felt sick as he stared at it, but it was truly the only way he could get out of here. So, truly, it was now or never. If he didn’t break it now, the guards would shoot him dead before he ever had a chance.

Hoping that May had enough time to get away, Grant held his breath and brought his hand up. He threw the Crystal towards the ground and it shattered just as he jumped to his feet. Mist started to swirl around him on the floor and started to crawl its way up his legs. He grew panicked as his legs began to grow heavy and he looked down to see a rock-like substance consuming him.

No, not rock. A cocoon. So this is what it was like to change, to become something else.

Grant’s body froze as the cocoon began to completely overtake him. And just as the cocoon began to cover his face, he could see the cell door swing open and several guards come storming into the room, all screaming at each other to take fire. He managed to crack a smile as his vision grew dark and he could hear no more.

And then came the heat. Then came the blast. And an inferno finally took the place of Grant Ward and the world began to burn.

Burn, burn, burn.

Chapter End Notes

And there it is! Literal hell is released with Grant's transformation, it's just a matter of what happens when he gets out. Considering all of his pent-up rage. Keep the comments and kudos coming! (I love your comments! Keep 'em coming! And I'll get to Fire in the Sky soon!)
The Monster That I Depise

Chapter Summary

Breakout!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Sometime Later)

The first thing Grant noticed when he came to was the flames.

The whine of sirens and the crackle of flames filled his ears as he struggled to pull himself off of the floor. Once he had himself up right, he brought his hands to his face and froze. Bright, red flames were burning on the skin of his hands and he felt absolutely nothing from them. He felt no heat or pain from them; it was like they weren’t even there.

His eyes adjusted to the newfound brightness of the cell and he was dumbfounded by what he saw. The wall had been blasted away to reveal the sky outside and rubble laid scattered all across the burning room. How had he survived? He used to work with explosives all the time and he knew that there was no way that he could’ve survived a blast like that. Unless the blast had come from him.

Then he remembered the Crystal that May had given him. He had gone through Terrigensis and had survived. He could feel the fire burning through his veins, but not the flames that burned off of his very skin. His body took on a faint shake as he slowly brought himself to his feet and he felt as though he was going to explode.

Maybe it was just his body trying to adjust to its newfound abilities, he wasn’t sure. But he knew that he didn’t like the feeling. It reminded of him of his childhood when he would erupt with rage. It was like that very rage had filled his veins and had set him on fire, and he intended on releasing it.

“I… I don’t feel so good.” Grant thought, stumbling his way across the destroyed cell. He stepped over the bodies of three very charred guards, knowing that he had killed them when he had changed. But did it really matter since those guards were only a part of a computer program? But it really wasn’t something that Grant was thinking about at this second.

He stumbled out of the cell and into a somewhat charred clearing, an alarm blaring from somewhere above, “I don’t like that noise… I don’t like this place.” His eyes, which now had taken on a reddish hue, surveyed his surroundings, “Burn it down and I can get the hell out of here. Let them all die and let me live. This world doesn’t matter anyways.”

Grant took a few more steps before a figure moved out of the darkness and stepped in front of him. He raised his hands to attack, the flames flaring off of his skin, but he stopped as soon as he realized who it was.

May.

She gave him a quiet look, obviously taking in the flames that now burned off of his skin and his burned and tattered clothing, “Follow me and we can get out of here. You’re in no shape to fight, so
let me handle it.” she stated matter of factly. “And you don’t need to make things worse for yourself. If too many people die here, Hydra will have more reasons to kill you.”

Fire flared in Grant’s eyes as he took a sluggish step towards May, “They’re not real. I can kill them all if I have to.” he growled. “If that’s what I have to do to get out of here, then I’ll do it.”

“You can barely even stand on your own two feet right now.” May pointed out. “And I know that there’s no way in hell that you can control those powers of yours. One wrong move and you explode again. We best go now and take the way I recommend before guards flood the place and shoot us dead before we can even think.”

Grant hesitated for a few seconds but ended up nodding in agreement. He followed May as she motioned for him to follow her down a side hallway just as he could hear guards shouting and yelling. They stayed silent until they put enough distance between them and the guards.

“It’s best that you try to put those flames out.” May ordered, ushering them into a darkened storage closet as they could hear guards from another location. “They’ll give away our position.”

“I’ve been trying!” Grant snapped quietly, the flames blazing. “But they won’t respond to me. They just keep burning and they won’t stop.”

“It’s because you’re upset.” May whispered. “I saw it in your eyes earlier. You’re angry. They’re probably responding to those emotions. Maybe they’ll die off if you just try to calm down for a few minutes.”

“I can’t.”

May took a breath, “I still can’t remember much, but I remember you being a man driven by rage.” she stated, her voice still a whisper. “That rage will get you kill here and there’s no telling to how your powers really work. But they’ll probably keep burning if your rage is still present. You need to calm yourself down before something happens. Just think of something to do so then we can be on our way.”

Grant really didn’t appreciate May’s tone, but she had no reason to be polite with him after everything that had happened. And she had a point. He needed to calm himself before things got out of his control. He didn’t want to become the monster he already knew that he was. Glaring at May in the dim light of his flames, he took a few deep breaths and thought about seeing Skye and Max again and of how happy they would be to see him. He did this for a about a minute and they were sent into total darkness.

“There? You happy?” Grant spat, crossing his arms. “But there’s no guarantee that I won’t flare again. Everything’s going too fucking fast and it’s really, really hard to think right now.”

“Then we’ll get out of here as soon as possible.”

“As long as we can find a car that doesn’t have some kind of tracker in it, we should be fine.” Grant stated, turning away. “But that means we’ll have to probably hijack a car off of these grounds. It’ll take a while.”

“As long as it gets us out of here, I’m fine with it.” May reached for the doorknob and turned it when she was sure that it was quiet outside. She slowly opened the door and slipped out, Grant following right behind her.

They quietly made their way to a fire exit and quickly went inside of the stairwell. May stopped and turned to Grant just as they made it down to the first landing.
“Everything’s way too easy.” she stated. “Meaning there could be a trap waiting for us somewhere. They’re expecting us to make our way out and they’ve prepared by covering every possible exit. That’s why we haven’t seen anyone yet. They’re elsewhere.”

“Then I intend on fighting my way through.” Grant growled, pushing his way past May and continuing down the stairs. “I didn’t come all this way to stop now. I didn’t go through Terrigenesis to sit back and surrender. I was given these powers for a reason and I fully intend on using them. Hydra can kiss my ass.”

May frowned and muttered under her breath as she followed Grant down. She could hardly even remember this man and she already hated him. She just knew that she had to trust him with this, because he was her only way of getting to SHIELD. Honestly, she really hoped that she hadn’t helped to create a monster when she gave him that Crystal.

They made their way down several flights of stairs before they heard the thud of heavy footsteps from below. Grant stopped and suddenly pointed at a door near them, “There! Go out there! They’re coming from below, so we need to go now! There should be an elevator nearby that should take us to the ground floor.”

“And how can you be so sure?” May asked, following Grant out the door and into a narrow hallway. “We could be on the other side of the building from it for all you know. I’m the one who works here. I give the directions.”

Grant stopped and glared at her, fire burning in his eyes, “I used to work here before Hydra took over.” he growled. “I know most of this building like the back of my hand. I know that there’s an elevator nearby. And besides, you don’t tell me what to do. No one tells me what to do. I’m just agreeing to work with you so we can get the hell out of here.”

May started to say something, but stopped as Grant suddenly started walking away. She sighed and followed the man out into a bigger and brighter hallway.

“There.” Grant stopped and pointed at a set of elevator doors a few feet away. “That’s the main elevator. Should take us to the ground floor and we can make it out to the parking lot. If we can get that far.”

He didn’t wait for a response before he charged for the elevator and pressed the button to call it. He knew that it may be a while before the car made it to them. The Triskelion was dozens of stories high and there was no telling to where it was stationed at.

“We’ll have to hold ourselves here.” he stated, flexing his now-burning fingers. “If guards come, we fight. Our only way out now is this elevator.”

May frowned once again and started to reach for the pistol at her side, “I don’t think they realize you helped you just yet.” she stated. “They’ll be even angrier once they realize a traitor is in their midst. There’s no telling to what Madame Hydra will order. We’ll be fugitives for sure.”

“That’s the least of our troubles here.” Grant stated, turning back towards the elevator as it dinged. “I.”

Grant stopped as the doors opened to reveal that the elevator wasn’t empty and that it held the one person he least expected to see.


The woman smiled as she took a step towards the two, her two guards remaining in the elevator,
“Now, I’m surprised that you made it this far.” she stated coldly, glaring at Grant. “And Agent May, I didn’t expect you to be the one to help a criminal such as him. Now you’re both a threat that must be extinguished. Before you can find a way out of my world.” She smiled again and nodded behind them.

Grant sensed that guards had approached them from behind, he didn’t even have to look. He didn’t know just how he knew, but he could tell that there were about four of them. He snarled and flames burst from his skin, “You don’t know how much I’ve suffered because of this world!” he screamed. “This world is killing me and all I want to is get the hell out of here!”

Aida’s face fell, “How are you aware?” she asked. “I don’t recall uploading you in here. Now, I remember Agent May, she was the first. But I don’t remember you. Who the hell are you?”

“I died a year ago. Whatever you did to create this hell somehow trapped my consciousness in here.” Grant growled, his flames flaring again. “And I fully intend on getting out of here.”

“That isn’t happening. And would SHIELD even accept a monster like you?”

Grant snarled again and the flames grew even bigger.

“Get him!” Aida ordered, motioning for the guards to fire. But Grant screamed and was suddenly engulfed in flames, causing them to pause.

May dropped to the ground for cover, realizing that Grant couldn’t be shot. Aida screamed again and the guards started firing their weapons at Grant as she took cover, but every bullet was burnt up by the flames. Grant screamed again and sent a fireball sailing into Aida, knocking her back into the window with enough force to cause it to crack. He smiled as the glass gave way and the android fell out, plummeting to her death. He then attacked the six guards and took them out with ease.

May’s eyes widened as she rose to her feet, watching as Grant dropped to his knees and the flames snuffed out again, “You… You killed her. You actually killed her.” she stammered as he stood to his feet. “You-“

“Yeah, but we need to go. Now.” Grant hissed, grabbing her arm and heading into the elevator. “We have a chance. I’ll get you to safety.”

(Elsewhere, Sometime Later)

The news came surprisingly fast and had the entirety of the team glued to the TV, waiting to see just what had happened.

“The attack has been labeled a terrorist action and the two wanted are said to be highly dangerous and are not to be engaged by civilians.” the reporter, a man by the name of Sunil Bakshi, stated. “Approximately two hours ago, an Inhuman in Hydra custody was given a Terrigen Crystal by an inside man and was allow to go through Terrigenesis. His transformation caused a massive explosion that damaged a major part of the Triskelion and killed several brave guards in the process.

The Inhuman and the traitor fought their way out, killing several more in the process. And, unfortunately, Madame Hydra was attacked in the process and is currently receiving emergency aid
as we speak. May she be well.

If you see these two people, you are to call Hydra authorities immediately. Do not, under any circumstances, confront these two.”

Once the photos of the fugitives were put up on the screen, everyone froze.

“Like I said. Grant Ward and Melinda May are not to be approached even more. Ward is the current Director of SHIELD and is now an Inhuman with highly-unstable pyrokinetic abilities. May is-“

The TV went quiet as Skye shut it off and threw aside the remote.

“We need to watch the rest of that!” Coulson exclaimed. “They were talking about May!”

“What?! So we can listen to Hydra spew their nonsense about them?!” Skye demanded, the ground shaking slightly beneath them. “They’re out there somewhere with Hydra after them! And now Grant’s suddenly an Inhuman? Things are going downhill as we speak. We need to go out there and find them!”

“And is it worth getting caught, too?” Simmons asked coldly. “Even though I hate Ward with every fiber of my body, I can trust that he can find his way back here. He’s a killer anyways, so I won’t be surprised if he kills every agent he meets.”

“Does that matter here anyways?” Skye snapped, glaring at Simmons. “If they have to fight, they fight. I don’t think it matters to what they do. And there’s no telling to how Grant is now that he’s Inhuman.”

“Daddy,” Mack looked down as his daughter, Hope, grabbed his hand. “Why is the news saying Mr. Grant is a bad man?” she asked. “He likes to play with me when Max is with him.”

“That’s because we can’t trust what the news says, Sparkplug.” Mack replied, shaking his head. “He’s just fighting his way out, he did nothing wrong here. Sometimes people have to do drastic things to protect themselves and others. He’s just trying to protect us. I promise that he’s not a bad man.”

Skye shook her head, “I don’t even know what to think anymore.” she mumbled, turning to leave the room. She didn’t want to be arguing when Grant and May were in trouble. She just wanted to see Grant safe and sound.

And maybe she did love him again, but at least one person now cared for him. She didn’t care that Grant was now apparently an unstable Inhuman, that meant he was no different than herself. Without another word to the others, she left the room and found Max in Grant’s room.

She sighed and sat down on the edge of Grant’s bed as Max jumped up and laid down next to her. “I don’t know what to do, Max.” she whispered, petting the shepherd’s head. “Everything’s going to hell.” Tears started to build up in her eyes, “Grant’s in trouble and there’s nothing I can do about it. I guess that I do love him, but I probably won’t get the chance to say so and tell him that I do forgive him.

But I’m scared to know what he’s like now. I’m afraid that his powers will do something to him.” she continued, still stroking the dog’s head. “He’s never been stable and I don’t know what the transformation did to him.

I don’t want to lose him again.”
And an extra long chapter for y'all since I'll be out of town for a few days. So Grant and May escape. Aida's injured. And the team finds out about what happened. Definitely borrowing from canon here. But it works. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Pouring the Fuel, Fanning the Flames

Chapter Summary

Grant and May return.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

(Two Hours Later)

“There’s no way that we could deal with him now!” Coulson exclaimed, his voice tight and thin. “I don’t want to lose my life if I happen to say the wrong thing!”

“You know, it doesn’t help that every little thing you say to him happens to be the wrong thing.” Skye snapped back, glaring at Coulson to make her point. “How about you just shut your mouth around him and let him help. He won’t hurt you if you don’t bother him. If we all work together, no one gets hurt.”

Coulson’s mouth grew into a fine, thin line, “And how are we supposed to do anything when we have a wanted fugitive on our hands?” he asked coldly. “Everything’s going to utter shit and you seem to act like it doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it matters! Mace is dead, May and Grant are God knows where, and we still can’t get to Fitz at all!” she shot back, standing her ground. “You may not see it, but I’m absolutely freaking out right now. I’m just not the one focusing on the person that isn’t currently our enemy.”

Her voice grew low and cold, “So what if Grant happens to be Inhuman now? It’s just more firepower for us.” she continued, crossing her arms over her chest. “Just stay away from him. It seems like Grant’s taken care of May for us, so all that’s left is Fitz. Even Aida seems to be crippled now. All we have to do is go after Fitz. Then we’ll get the hell out of here. Get that fucking stick out of your ass and help us do so.”

Skye went to turn around and leave the room, but Coulson’s voice stopped her.

“And how do you plan on getting Ward out of here?” he asked, staring at Skye’s back. “He’s not like us. If anything, he’s a ghost. He doesn’t have a body to return to like we do. There is no way for him to return. He’ll die here like the monster he is and then he’ll finally burn in hell. I don’t know why you’re fighting so hard for him.”

Skye clenched her fists as she could feel the energy start to build up in them, “Maybe some people just deserve another chance.” she stated through gritted teeth. “Grant doesn’t deserve to be left here.”

“And what makes you think he deserves another chance after everything that he did?”

“And what made you judge, jury, and executioner?” she asked coldly, refusing to turn around to look at him. “And don’t you think if we had of given him another chance in the first place, we wouldn’t be in the mess that we’re in now? We were the reason for his downfall.”

A vein bulged in Coulson’s forehead as he took a sudden step forward, “We’re to blame? What the
hell are you thinking, Daisy?” he growled. “He was the monster. He was the one that stabbed us all in the backs. What has he done to you?”

“Look, he hasn’t ‘done’ anything to me.” Skye stated, turning around to face Coulson again. “Being with him here has made me realize a few things about him. I… I don’t think he was ever evil. Garrett clearly had been doing something to him for those sixteen years he was with him. Then there was his family.

By the time he was in the Vault, he just needed help. And we didn’t give it to him. We were the reason for that revenge spree.” She paused and shook her head, “Don’t you think we should at least give him one more chance?”

“No.”

A muscle twitched in Skye’s face, “If you won’t, I will.” she stated coldly, turning around once more. “He’s been through enough and he’s shown that he’s more than willing to help. Even if it is just for me and himself.”

She left the room, leaving Coulson in a silent, seething fury.

“I can’t believe that he’s more worried about leaving Grant here than he is about getting us out.” Skye thought, angrily making her way back towards the common room, where of which she had left Max. “He’s stuck in the past, dwelling on things that really don’t matter right now. We’ve got bigger things to worry about. We-“

She stopped as she heard shouting and the rush of footsteps. She began to follow the sound, which sounded as though it was coming from the main entrance of the base. “What could that be?” she muttered under her voice. “Are we under attack?”

As she made her way towards the main hallway, she was stopped by Mack. “I guess you heard the commotion, right?” he asked, looking down at her. “It’s kind of hard to miss.”

“What’s going on?” Skye asked, looking around at the flurry of agents. “Please tell me we’re not under attack.”

Mack shook his head, “No. But someone’s here, but we’re not sure of who. They triggered the perimeter defenses coming in. There’s,”

He was cut off as Skye suddenly pushed past him, her interest drawn towards the main door as it suddenly slid open and a large figure suddenly stumbled into the clearing and fell to the concrete below him. She and several other agents shot forward and helped the man up, her stomach freezing as she saw just who it was.

“Grant?”

Tired, dull eyes met her and she was greeted with a weak smile, “Skye.” His head fell against her shoulder, “I’m tired.” he mumbled. “Hurts.”

Skye’s arms suddenly wrapped around Grant’s torso and she brought him close, ignoring the fact that he smelled of smoke, “I thought I lost you.” she whispered. “Don’t do that again.”

“Don’t worry.” he slurred, clearly on the verge of passing out. “Don’t plan on it.”

“I’d get him somewhere he can rest for a while. I think today drained all of his energy.”
Skye’s heart skipped several beats as she looked up at the source of the familiar voice, still pretty much cradling Grant in her arms, “M-May?!“ she stammered. “You’re alive!”

May smiled at her, “Of course I am.” she replied. “Did you not see all the wanted bulletins for us?” Her gaze drifted down to the half-conscious Grant, “He managed to get us here, but I think that he was only running on adrenaline. I think the change drained everything out of him.”

“What do you remember?” Skye asked, noting that Grant’s heart rate was sky-high. “I assume that Grant broke through to you.”

May shrugged, “I don’t think he did all the way. Some things are still really fuzzy and unclear.” she replied, leaning down to help Skye and another agent get Grant to his feet. “But it’ll come in time, I suppose. Hopefully, we’ll be out of here by then.”

“Yeah. Fitz is the only one left now.” Skye stated, carefully wrapping an arm around Grant’s torso as they helped Grant towards the common room. “But there’s no telling to how we can get to him.”

“Well, Ward sent Aida flying out of an elevator from several stories up. I don’t think she’s dead, but she’s definitely crippled. That may be our chance to get to him.” May explained as they got into the common room and got Grant down onto a couch. She stepped back and returned her full attention to Skye, “I’ll go find Coulson.”

Skye nodded, “And, please, keep him away from Grant. I think at this point he’ll try anything to get rid of him.” she stated. “Everything’s falling apart and I don’t know how to keep it together.”

May gave a soft smile, “There’s definitely something different about him, I can tell that much. But… But I don’t think that he’s a threat anymore. We don’t have to worry about him right now, that’s for sure. I’ll try to get Coulson to see the real problem, but I’m not promising anything. You know how he is.”

“Unfortunately.”

May sighed and turned around, “I’ll go greet the others, I saw Mack already. But I’m not sure to where he went. I imagine he went to go find Coulson.” she said, leaving the room.

Skye turned back towards Grant, whom of which was looking at her with weak eyes, “I think you need some rest.” she whispered, sitting down next to him on the couch. “Looks like you’re about out.”

“What are they saying ‘bout me?” he asked, his voice hoarse and low. “I saw the news and I know that the others saw it as well.”

“I… I’ll just say that Coulson and Simmons aren’t taking it that well.” she answered, smiling slightly as Grant leaned his head up against her shoulder. “Only more fuel to the flame.”

“Only literally in this case. I guess you already know about that.”

“The news was pretty transparent about your powers. Guess they wanted everyone to think that you’re some big monster.”

“I’m probably their most wanted now. Want me dead all because I’m Inhuman and the Director of SHIELD. Doesn’t help I tried to kill that robot.” He yawned, a slight smile pulling at his lips as a bark sounded and a big, black blob launched into his lap. “Someone missed me.” he mumbled, running his hand through Max’s fur. “That’s nice.”
Skye smiled and silently took in Grant’s appearance. He was dirtied and his clothes were torn and singed. She knew that she wouldn’t be able to get him to clean up before he fell asleep. The change took a hell of a lot out of him, especially considering that his powers were practically a burden to his body right now.

“Wanna sleep,” he mumbled, his eyes fluttering shut as he hugged Max closer to his body. “It’s hot. I…” he trailed off as sleep drug him under and he soon began to snore.

“Best you sleep now before the storm comes.” Skye muttered to herself. “I don’t want to know what’s coming next. Especially with Coulson and Jemma. They think that you’re a monster. They’ll try to throw you out.” She leaned over and pressed a soft kiss to his stubble-covered cheek, a hot blush quickly rising to her own.

“I’ll make sure that nothing happens to you. I swear on it.

And besides, we got much bigger stuff to worry about. The end of the world is here.”

Chapter End Notes

I know I should’ve made the reunion between Skye and May more, but I really wasn’t sure of what to write. Blame the craziness of the plot and the narrow timeframe they have to get out. And so all they have left now is Fitz. How will that work out? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
I See the Fire in the Sky

Chapter Summary

The final countdown begins.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Day)

The room grew still as Grant came stomping in, his footsteps heavy and angry. All eyes turned towards him as he stood at the head of the table, much to Coulson and Simmons’ distaste. His gaze swept over the present team members, “Look, what happened these past two days doesn’t mean that I’m out of the game.” he stated coldly, his exhaustion from the day before completely gone. “I’m still here.”

Coulson narrowed his eyes, “You don’t make the decisions here, Ward.” he said, watching as a red color started to dance in Grant’s irises. “If I want you to step to the side, you’re going to step to the side.”

“It may haven’t occurred to you yet, but technically I’m the leader here.” Grant growled, gripping the edge of the table to keep his composure. “Different world, different rules. I say we abide by this world’s rules so we can get close to Fitz. As far as I know, that robot doesn’t know that any of you are here. She just knows that I’m somehow aware and that I took May from the Triskellion. It’s best that we keep it that way.”

“I’m not taking orders from a deranged murderer!” Coulson snapped, taking a step back from the table. “You’re-“

He was cut off as the room suddenly grew hot and a loud fwoosh sounded from Grant. They all looked over in surprise to see flames billowing off of the Inhuman and absolute rage shining in his eyes.

“I don’t care what you think!” Grant screamed, dark red flames pouring from his eyes. The edge of the old table was burned and smoking. “We’re gonna have to work together if any of us is wanting to get the hell out of here! So what if I’m in charge here?! It doesn’t mean a single damn thing to you!”

“Grant,” Skye spoke up, giving him a soft, but stern, look. “Don’t do this.”

Grant’s face immediately softened and he took a sharp breath, running his hands through his hair. The flames soon dissipated, leaving him, and his clothes, completely unscathed. He sighed and kept his gaze away from everyone else, “Like I said. If we’re gonna get out of here, we need to work together.”

“And that means you need to keep your role as Director.” Mack commented, trying to keep things calm. He didn’t want Grant erupting again. It was clear that the newborn Inhuman was completely unstable.
Grant took another breath, now keeping his gaze focused on Mack to avoid the glares of Coulson and Simmons, “Yes. That Aida needs to believe that nothing’s happened here other than Mace dying and me taking up the mantle of Director. She may already have her suspicions, but we can’t suddenly have Coulson taking the charge. If I recall, he’s just a teacher here. It’ll definitely set her off if he’s Director. So it needs to be me. Maybe not behind the scenes, but definitely when we launch our next attack.”

“But wouldn’t she know we’re after Fitz if we suddenly attack the Triskellion?” May asked, crossing her arms. “She’s not dumb.”

“I’ve thought about that. But if we can do this carefully, we can use the attack as a cover. Make it seem like the newly-turned Director of SHIELD is attacking in retaliation for the torture he went through.” Grant explained, his voice void of any emotion. “And as Hydra’s too busy fighting us, a smaller team can go in and extract Fitz.”

“And who’s going to be on that team?” Simmons asked, keeping her gaze away from Grant.

“You’re obviously going to be on it.” Grant answered sternly. “This team needs to be comprised of those who have meaning to him so we can manage to break through to him. And it only needs to be three to four people.”

“Then make the others be you, Skye, and Mack.” May suggested. “Each of you mean something to him, and that makes four people.”

“And why does Ward have to be on it?”

“Well, Simmons, you and Fitz are together. Skye and Mack are his best friends. And Ward was his friend. All big meanings.”

“I tried to break through to him by referencing the pod.” Grant spoke up quietly. “I knew it was risky, but I think it worked for a second. He left the room before I could say anything else. I know that the pod is a sensitive matter for him, but it was the only thing I knew I could say that was big enough for him.”

“You should’ve said something else!”

Grant’s eyes flared again, “I did! I brought you up, but he had no fucking idea who you were!” he snapped. “I had to try something!”

“Enough!” May yelled, trying to stop the two before Grant could fully snap. “Look, the team’s been decided. I don’t think Ward’s past actions matter here. If he wants to help, we’ll take it.” She turned towards Grant, “Look, I’ll handle the tactical planning with Coulson and Mack. Go take a breather before you get out of control again. We can’t risk losing you to those flames.”

Grant cussed under his breath and stormed out of the room, wisps of smoke following behind. He made it halfway towards the bunks before a hand on his shoulder stopped him.

“Grant, you shouldn’t be doing this.”

He spun around but immediately loosened up as soon as he realized that it was Skye. “Look,” he began, taking a breath. “I’m tired of them acting like that. I almost died for them and this is the thanks I get? I put myself through literal hell and they have the nerve to yell at me?”

“You don’t need to listen to them.” she stated, gently taking his hand. “And besides, I thought you weren’t doing this for them. I thought it was for me and Fitz.”
“I,”

“Grant, I’m not asking you to be nice to them, I just want you to tolerate them until we can get out of here. That’s all. At least you have May on your side. All we have to do is get Fitz and find you a way out.”

“If you can. There’s no guarantee that there’s even a way out for me. And what good is it going to do if I do get out?” he asked quietly. “I’m going to lose everything I have here. Everything that I built. Max. You. Everything. But I die if I stay here. There’s no win in this situation. Maybe… Maybe I should just stay behind and just make sure that you do get out. No one cares if I die.”

“Grant,” Skye began, looking him firmly in the eyes. “We’ve come so far, don’t lose your hope now. There has to be a way. I’m sure of it. We just have to look in the right place.”

“And what if it’s not there?”

“I promise you, it’s there.”

Grant looked away for a while before he returned his gaze to her, “Thank you for being the only one that honestly believes in me.” he stated silently, threading his fingers with hers. “At least you’re not like the others.”

She smiled at him, “I finally believe that you at least deserve a second chance.” she stated softly. “You’re not the bad guy anymore. You just need someone that cares. And trust me, I’ll find you a way out.”

“And you won’t abandon me once we do get to that point?” he asked. “You won’t throw me aside like a piece of trash?”

Skye gently shook her head, “No, I won’t. I’ll… I’ll make sure that you’ll be able to find your place back in the world.” she answered. “I promise you that.”

Grant’s throat grew dry and he licked his lips, leading her towards the bunks so no one else could hear the rest of their conversation. They slipped inside his bunk and he gently closed the door behind them.

“Where’s Max?” she asked, looking around the room.

“He’s with Hope and some of the refugee kids.” he answered, turning to look at her again. “I figured he could get some play time in.”

“Good. And any reason to why you brought me in here?”

Grant shrugged, “I wanted to talk to you without anyone else hearing it. The base is usually pretty active this time of night, so it’s best we have our privacy.”

Skye raised an eyebrow, “How is it any different than earlier?” she questioned. “What else do you want to say?”

“I wanted to say this just in case I don’t make it out. I want you to hear this now.” he answered, looking directly into her eyes. “I… I…” he trailed off and shook his head. He took a sharp breath, “I still love you. Yes, I know that you don’t feel the same way, but I figured that I should say this now. I don’t have much time left. It’s already Friday.

I think going though Terrigenesis bought me some more time. But I don’t think I’ll make it through
the weekend. I’ll be lucky if I make it to Tuesday.” he continued. “I’m still dying. I figured that I should at least get that off of my chest. I didn’t want to die without you knowing that.”

Skye’s heart skipped a beat and she was quiet for a while, trying to piece together her own feelings. Yes, she knew that she loved him again, but she was unsure of how to address that to him. But she figured that she should just say it.

“I… I love you, too.” she answered, blush rising to her cheeks. “I just realized it like yesterday that I do love you again. Being with you here has made me realize who you really are and it’s changed things for me. But don’t let the others know that.”

Grant looked at her and a smile started to pull at his lips, but he wasn’t sure of what to say. He didn’t expect Skye to reciprocate his own feelings. So he was totally at a loss for words. Especially now.

He froze as Skye reached up and kissed him on his lips. Skye pulled back and smiled as Grant’s skin suddenly grew hot, knowing that he was completely flustered.

“Did I go too far?” she asked.

He shook his head, “N-No!” he stammered. “You’re good! You’re good!”

“You’re not going to burst into flames are you?”

“N-No. Mack installed power inhibitors in here this morning. I’m good as long as I stay in here.”

“You,”

Skye was cut off as Grant pulled her close and kissed her back, his hand trailing the bottom of her shirt. He pulled her towards the bed, “Is… Is this okay?” he asked in between breaths.

She ran her hand up the back of his shirt, “Yes.” was all she could get out before Grant pulled her down to the bed.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

So Grant has issues with his powers. Coulson and Simmons still hate him. He’s got a few more days to live. But at least he and Skye have made up! I wanted this to be a lot longer, but blame the screws in my leg that currently have me in pain. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Chapter Summary

The final fight begins.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(The Next Morning)

“I really wish that we aren’t about to walk straight into hell.”

Grant mumbled and pulled Skye’s bare body closer to his, “Yeah.” he agreed. “There’s honestly no
telling to what will come of this. We don’t even know if we’re going to be able to get Fitz or not.
Who’s to say that we’re not just going on a suicide mission?” He pressed his lips to the top of her
shoulder, “I don’t want you to die.”

Skye closed her eyes and sighed, “I’m still the only one you care about, right?” she asked quietly.
“Other than Fitz?”

“It’s not like the others want to see me live. May and Mack may be all smiles now, but I know that
the hate’s still hiding under the surface. If it came down to it, they’d still sacrifice me to ensure that
they get out.” Grant explained. “You’re the one that truly cares about me. Therefore you’re the only
one that I truly care about. Aside from Fitz.”

“What about yourself?”

Grant’s stomach briefly froze over, “Huh?”

“I assume that you’ve stopped caring about whether or not you get out. I know that you made me a
promise to help everyone get out, but what about you?” she asked gently, her eyes drifting over to
Max, who still lay asleep on the floor beside the bed. “Grant, you’ve lost the will to live, haven’t
you?”

“I…I…” Grant trailed off and sat up, looking down at Skye as she frowned at him. “What’s the use
of trying anyways?” he asked. “I’ll be dead in a matter of days. And there’s honestly no way out for
me. You can’t bring back the dead.”

Skye’s breath hitched in her chest, “Grant, you don’t have to be this way. There has to be some way
out for you.” she stated, sitting up. “We’ll find it.”

“Skye, I don’t even have a real body anymore. It was destroyed in space a year ago.” Grant said
sadly. “Are you planning on creating a body from nothing? Last I checked, that’s physically
impossible.”

“We’ll… We’ll find a way. I promise.” she answered, truly not knowing of what to tell him. “It’s out
there somewhere. But we’ve got to rescue Fitz before anything else. And that’s if we can.”

“You’re right about us going straight into hell. We’re attacking the beast right at its head.” Grant
stated, trying to move the subject on. “The Triskellion is hell. We don’t have a big enough army. We’re outnumbered. The two of us may be superhuman, but that doesn’t mean that we’re invincible.”

“You’re right. We’re not. But we’re strong. And we’ve got allies. So hopefully we can get in and out and get Fitz without a problem. We’re only the infiltration team.”

“We’ll need a big enough distraction to keep Hydra busy.” Grant stated, wrapping his arm around Skye as she drew close to him. “I heard that Triplett had pulled something together, but wasn’t told what. Knowing him, it’s something big.”

“What has he been told?”

“He doesn’t know about the rescue mission for Fitz. All he knows is that we’re finally assaulting Hydra head on,” he explained. “And that’s all he needs to know.”

Skye sighed and leaned her head up against Grant’s broad shoulder, “Do you think we’ll win?” she asked. “That we’ll get Fitz and that we can get the hell out of here?”

“Honestly? No, I don’t. But that’s just me.” Grant answered lightly. “But my one hope is that I can get out of here and live a normal life. I’ve always wanted to have one and I hope that I’ll get to have the chance. I grew up wanting a normal life. To be a father and have a family that doesn’t beat the shit out of me.” He chuckled softly, “I’ve always wanted a son named Adian. I don’t know why. Maybe a little girl, too. But I know that I’ll never be able to get that.

At this point all I can hope for is to find somewhere by myself and get a dog or two.” he continued. “At least it’ll be peaceful. That’s all I want.”

Skye looked away for a bit, quiet as she thought. She really wanted to get Grant out of here now. She wanted to give him the life he always wanted. And she hadn’t told anyone this yet, but she had been thinking recently about going off with Grant when they got out. Truly, she needed a break from everything, and going with Grant was probably the only way she could it. But she didn’t want to say anything in case Grant didn’t make it.

“Well, we’ll make sure that you’ll be able to do that.” she said quietly. “At this point, it’s what you deserve.”

Grant smiled and leaned down to kiss her again, “Thank you.” he stated simply. “At least you’re giving me a chance. But we’ve got to win this fight first.

And we’ve got to fight like hell to do it.”

(A Few Hours Later)

“We wait for the signal and we go in.”

Skye looked over at Grant as they, Simmons, and Mack hid in a nondescript van. “What’s the signal?” she asked. “I assume it’s what Trip put together?”

Grant nodded, “I still don’t know what it is, but I assume that we’ll know when it comes.” he answered. He looked back to Simmons and Mack, “Once we’re clear, you two follow us in.
Hopefully the signal is big enough of a distraction so we can get in with ease. We just have to hope that they won’t send Fitz somewhere else.”

“Most likely they’ll take him to a secure location in the building.” Mack stated. “They wouldn’t dare take him outside during an onslaught. There has to be rooms built for these types of situations, so he’ll be there. I’m downloading a schematic of the Triskellion now. That should tell us where the rooms are.”

“And what if Fitz is gone when we get there?” Simmons asked coldly, glaring at Grant. “What do we do then?”

“He’ll be there. I assure you.” Skye answered for Grant, trying to ignore the fact that Simmons was glaring at Grant. Oh, if only she knew what had happened last night.

“And once we’ve gotten him back, we take him back here and then head to the extraction point.” Grant continued, adjusting his tac vest. A slight smirk pulled at his lips as he realized that Skye was staring at his biceps. He was really glad that they had made up.

“I still don’t understand why we have to take orders from you.” Simmons muttered, glaring at him again. “I hate this.”

Grant snarled at her and his eyes briefly shone a nasty blood-red hue, “I didn’t ask for your opinion. And besides, we’re in no position for you to constantly bitch at me, okay?” he growled. “Also, I don’t think it’s wise to piss me off right now. Unless you want to end up as a pile of ashes.” He turned around to face the van’s side door, “For the time being, I’m the Director. It doesn’t matter to what you say. I’m-“

He was cut off as Skye grabbed his wrist and turned his attention towards her. “Grant, don’t do this.” she warned softly. “This isn’t the time for you to lose your temper.”

“Tell that to her.”

Skye shot Simmons a warning glare before looking back to Grant, “Once we get out of here, you don’t have to deal with the others anymore.” she stated. “Deal with it until then. Okay?”

Grant took a sharp breath and nodded slowly, “Okay. But it doesn’t mean that I like this. I…” he trailed off and shook his head. “Never mind.”

Skye went to say something but was stopped as the van shook violent as a massive explosion rang out.

“I guess that’s Trip’s signal.” Mack stated. “But he actually bombed them?”

Grant opened the van door and grabbed his handgun, “Knowing him, it was in a place that wouldn’t kill anyone. It’s just enough to turn Hydra’s attention elsewhere.” he stated, hopping out of the van. “But that’s our cue. Let’s go.”

Skye watched quietly as they followed him, frowning as she saw his eyes turn blood-red again. She worried that his powers would take control of him in this situation. They didn’t need a monster on their hands as well as a war. She knew that the dam holding Grant’s rage back was full of holes and cracks. It wouldn’t take much for it to break.

And if it broke, she’d hate to be whoever stood in his way.

Grant was a dangerous weapon and it would only take a second before everything would be turned
to ashes.

Chapter End Notes

So the final fight is here. Who will rise to the top? And will Fitz be saved? You'll have to find out. And I threw a little hint in there to what's coming in the end. Only one person knows what it is. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Embrace the Monster I'm Becoming

Chapter Summary

Things continue to get worse.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Grant stepped back as a lone Hydra soldier fell dead to the ground. A small smirk pulled at his lips as he put his gun away in its holster and turned to face the others, “Seems some soldiers stayed behind to protect the interior of the Triskellion.” he stated. “Most fled to the site of the explosion. But we don’t have much time until they realize that the blast was only a diversion. Some other teams of agents are infiltrating from various points to provide more of a distraction so we can do our job.”

He turned towards Mack, “How close are we to Fitz’s supposed location?” he asked. “Hopefully he’ll be in the safe room.”

“It’s down the next two hallways.” Mack replied, thumbing a schematic of the Triskellion on his tablet. “I thought you said that you worked here when it was SHIELD in this world? Shouldn’t you know the place?”

Grant shook his head and turned towards the opening that led to the next hallway, “I wasn’t high enough in the chain to know where they kept the leaders in case of emergency. It was out of my paygrade.” he stated. “Come on, we don’t have time to be talking about this kind of stuff. There’s no telling to how long Fitz will stay in the safe room until he’s possibly taken to a safer location. We have to do this now.”

“Shouldn’t there be more guards?” Skye asked as they started down the hallway. “It’s too quiet.”

“Don’t jinx us, Daisy.” Simmons muttered, grimacing as she stepped over the corpse of the soldier that Grant had killed. “I’d not like to die here.”

“Like I said earlier, they probably all ran towards the action. There isn’t going to be much of a guard presence in here. They’re trying to extinguish the fire from its source.” Grant stated coldly. “Again, they don’t have the best leadership here. Madame Hydra’s out of commission and Fitz was never suited to be a leader. Hydra’s probably running around like chickens with their heads cut off. They were never prepared for someone to actually strike back. All bark and no bite.”

“You’re not the one to be talking about Hydra like that.” Simmons muttered. “Don’t you remember who you are?”

Grant suddenly stopped, the air around him becoming distorted with the sudden heat coming from his body. “And what the fuck’s that supposed to mean?” he growled, keeping his back to them. “That doesn’t mean a single damn thing here and you know it. Keep bitching like that and you’re going to get yourself killed. And I’m not going to be the one to rescue you if you do get in that situation. Remember that. Keep your fucking mouth shut.”

“Grant,” Skye warned once more, not truly realizing the extent of Grant’s rage here. “We’re so close
to where we need to be, don’t do this now.”

“Daisy,” Simmons began, turning to face Skye. “He’s going to get us killed. Don’t you see he’s clearly unstable?” she asked coldly. “He’ll snap and kill us all.”

“I’m not a killer!” Grant growled, turning around to face them as flames flared from his eyes. “I won’t, I won’t…” he trailed off and zoned out as static filled his ears. The prelude to yet another hallucination.

“‘You’re fucking crazy, Grant! What the hell are you doing?! Put that down!’ Christian screamed as Grant pointed a gun towards him. ‘You’re just going to kill us like this?!’ He pointed at their parents’ bodies on the ground, ‘You’re a killer and you know it! You’ll burn in hell for this!’”

“I’m already there.” Grant mumbled, his aim faltering slightly. “You’re the proof.”

“What kind of monster kills their own family?!”

“You’re not my family. You never were.”

“And what’s the world going to say about a murderer like you? About a heartless killer?"

“I’m not a killer! I’m not-“

“A killer!” Grant screamed, gripping the sides of his head as a sudden and sharp pain brought him to his knees. “Not a killer!” He threw his head back and let out a wail of pain, flames bursting from his body.

Skye, Simmons, and Mack jumped back, nearly avoiding the flames as they raced towards them. The three agents looked at one another in horror as Grant looked at them, his eyes nothing but bright, red flames before the fire died away and he slumped to the ground.

“Grant!” Skye screamed, running towards Grant’s fallen form. She kneeled next to him and was relieved when she found that he was still awake. She managed to help him up, “What was that?” she whispered. “Are you okay?”

Grant wearily shook his head, “I think I’m starting to break down even more.” he mumbled, slowly pulling himself to his feet. “I don’t have long.” His eyes met hers and they were filled with fear, “I’ll be dead soon. Probably either tomorrow or the next day. Screw having until Tuesday. I think it’s worse than I thought.”

Skye gulped and bit her lip, casting a quick glance back towards Simmons and Mack before returning her attention to Grant, “Can you still do this?” she asked quietly. “We can retreat if you can’t.”

“No, no retreating.” he stated, his hands shaking as he reached to make sure that his gun was still at his side. “Fitz is more important than my wellbeing. Don’t worry about me. Care more about who’s really alive here.” He turned and began back down the hallway, not waiting for anyone’s response. He disappeared out of view, leaving the three behind.

“What the hell was that?” Mack asked, quickly catching up to Skye as they tried to follow Grant. “He completely lost it there for a second.”

“Whatever’s wrong with him causes him to have violent hallucinations.” Skye stated, worry lacing her voice. “So either something he or Simmons said must’ve triggered it.”
“We don’t need an insane, unstable Inhuman with us.” Simmons stated coldly. “That’ll surely get us killed.”

“Grant’s not looking for us to get killed.” Skye snapped back. “He’s trying his best to restrain himself, even with you. It’s just… I don’t know how well he’ll be able to handle himself against Hydra soldiers. That’s probably when his anger will shine. And I’m afraid for that.”

“And what are we going to do when he does snap and enviably becomes some kind of monster, Daisy? We all know that he’s capable of it.”

“I think we should at least give him a chance. He got us this far.” Mack stated, trying to get Simmons to stop in case Grant could still hear her. “He may be unstable, but at least he gets the job done.”

“Mack’s right, Jemma. Grant is getting the job done here, even if he’s not quite in his right mind.” Skye agreed. “He just wants to get out like the rest of us. And he honestly wants to help Fitz get the hell out of here, he’s not lying about that.”

“And what happened between you two?” Simmons asked coolly, keeping her gaze on the hallway ahead. “Why are you two suddenly so buddy-buddy with one another?”

A slight blush colored Skye’s cheeks as she thought of the night before, but she wasn’t about to tell Simmons that they had slept together and were in love again. She couldn’t know that. “It’s just that realize there’s more to him.” she lied. “I’m giving him another chance.”

“Well, I’m saying that.”

Simmons was cut off as several gunshots rang out from further down the hallway.

The color drained from Skye’s face as she looked back and forth between Simmons and Mack, horror in their eyes.

“The guards.” Mack stated. “There must be guards outside of the safe room.”

“Grant!” Skye screamed, running down the hallway, waiting for no instruction for the other two. Maybe it just had been Grant firing his gun. She was overthinking it for sure, but there was no telling to what could’ve happened with Grant’s current state.

She turned the corner, “Grant, are you…” she trailed off as she saw the four bodies littering the floor. All burned beyond all recognition.

Her heart stopped as her attention was brought to the flaming mass standing in the middle of the clearing in front of the bodies. The very mass that was shaped exactly like a man.

Dark red flames danced off of the figure’s burning skin as it seemed to glare at the bodies. Was it really glaring? It didn’t have a visible face, that was just the vibe that Skye was getting from the mass.

Then it turned to face her.

It stood there for a while, unmoving. As if it was afraid of the next step.

“Grant, what the hell happened to you?”
So, Grant's starting to break down even more and it seems that he's all but lost it. Can they rescue Fitz, or is Grant the newest obstacle that stands in their way of freedom? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
And Now the Lie's Collapsing

Chapter Summary

It becomes clear that Grant doesn't have much time left...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Skye stared in horror at the flaming mass in front of her. She knew that it was Grant, but at the very same time she wasn’t sure if it was truly him. His rage was often an otherworldly force and sometimes took control of him. Add that in with crumbling mental stability and newfound powers, it all mixed to create an explosive force. Literally.

“Grant,” she said softly, holding her ground. She was afraid to make any sudden movements. Even though Grant loved her, she didn’t trust him in this current state of mind. “Are you okay? Can you hear me?” she asked calmly, trying not to let her fear show. “Everything’s okay, the guards are dead. All we have to do now is get into that room and get Fitz out of there.”

Grant remained unmoving, only staring at her as though he couldn’t comprehend what she was saying at all. There was no telling to what his mind was like right now. Perhaps all reasoning with him had been abandoned.

“What the hell is that?”

Skye’s heart lurched in her chest and she turned to see Simmons and Mack standing behind her, both staring in fear at the flaming being that was Grant. She really didn’t need this right now. The last thing that they needed was for Simmons to send Grant into some kind of frenzy.

“Jemma, I can handle this.” Skye said sternly before the scientist could say anything else. “Just give me a few minutes.”

“We don’t have a few minutes! Fitz is on the other side of that door!” Simmons exclaimed, pointing at the door that lay behind Grant’s form. “We don’t have time for Ward to calm down from his temper tantrum!”

Grant suddenly turned to look at Simmons. Skye knew that he was seething and was practically shooting daggers at her, even though she couldn’t see his face. His flames shimmered as if his body was trembling itself. And that’s when she knew the truth.

He wasn’t raging. He was scared. The situation was more than likely that he had lost control during the fight with the guards and his flames had overtaken him. And now he couldn’t calm himself down enough to extinguish the flames.

“Grant,” she began, taking a cautious step towards him. “You can’t control them, can you?”

“No.”

The voice was weak and scared, sounding as though it crackled with flames itself. Grant was terrified of what he was capable of, and he had no way to stop it.
“I know how you feel, it’s hard. They’re foreign to you.” she stated softly, taking yet another step towards him. “It’s tough to finally control them. Hell, I still have trouble with using them. It hurts. I know that it’s scary.”

“They won’t go away.” Grant croaked, wrapping his flaming arms around himself. “Didn’t ask for this.”

“No one does.”

“Make them go away. It hurts.” he whimpered. “Didn’t hurt before.”

Skye bit her lip, she still wasn’t quite sure of what to say to him. His body was still getting used to the ability to produce flames, so of course it was going to hurt. It was probably burning his own skin.

“Just take a few breaths and try to calm down.” she stated, walking towards him again. “Don’t focus on the flames, focus on me. Okay? Don’t focus on anything else. Focus on my voice and just breath. Please.”

Grant continued to stand there, motionless. His head was starting to hurt bad and he was afraid that he was about to go into another violent hallucination. “Skye, I’m scared.” he whimpered. “I’m scared.”

Mack looked at Simmons before looking back towards Grant. This was supposed to be the big, bad villain that Coulson and Simmons wanted them all to hate? It sounded like he had just been scared the entire time. Fear makes people do the worst of things.

“There’s no reason to be afraid of yourself, Grant.” Skye continued. “Yes, you need to be afraid of what’s around you, but not of yourself. Please, just try to calm down. Remember, Fitz needs your help. I need your help.”

Grant stood there for several agonizing moments before the flames shimmered and extinguished. He fell to his knees, his clothes nothing but tatters hanging off of his skin. And his skin was covered with large, blistering burns from where he wasn’t able to handle of the flames just yet. He looked miserable.

Skye ran over to him and helped him sit up, trying to avoid contact with the burns on his skin. “You okay?” she whispered, gently wrapping an arm around his torso as she helped him to his feet.


“Guess that amount of power will do that to you.” Skye sighed and looked towards Mack, “Can you stay here with him while Jemma and I go get Fitz?”

“No.” Grant pushed away from her and stumbled over his own feet. “I wanna help. I can’t just sit back and do nothing.”

“Ward, you’re hurt.” Mack stated, coming forward. “I’m sure that Fitz will understand once we do break through to him.”

“I’m fine.” Grant hissed, turning towards the heavy iron door. “I can do this. I can…”

He stumbled again as everything went static once more.

“Grant, what the hell are we supposed to do?! Hydra will kill us! They’re everywhere now!”
“Grant!”

“Wha?” Grant straightened up and looked back towards the three agents. “What?”

“Your nose is bleeding.” Skye pointed at Grant’s noses, which had blood flowing from both nostrils.

Grant gingerly reached up and wiped at his nose, blood staining his fingers. “H-How?” he stammered. He shook his head, “I’m fine. I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?” Mack asked with a frown. “There’s no way that that’s normal at all. Especially after what just happened to you.”

“I’m fine.” Grant growled, turning back to the door and placing his hands on the cold metal. “I-"

He stopped as he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder and he craned his neck to see Skye standing there with a worried look on her face. “What?” he asked. “I told you, I’m okay.”

“You’re definitely not okay, Grant.” she said quietly. “First, you lose control of your powers and you hurt yourself. Then, your nose starts bleeding out of nowhere. You’re not okay. You know that this worries me since you said that you’re dying. You’re sick. You don’t have to do this, you know.”

“No, I have to.” he protested. “This is the only thing I have left, Skye. Just let me do it. We all know that there’s no way for me to survive this place. I’ll be dead before anything can be figured out. Just accept that and let me have this last moment. At least I’ll die a hero. And I’m better off dead anyways. No one wants me.” He turned back to the door, tears budding in the corners of his eyes, “I’m stuck inside this hell and I’ll die here.”

“No, you won’t.”

Flames started pooling out from underneath Grant’s fingertips, “And how can you be so sure?” he asked harshly. “You’re the only fucking one that wants me alive. I know for a fact that Coulson and Simmons will make it to where there’s no way for me to survive. How am I supposed to live when an entire world’s against you?”

“An entire world may be against you, but that doesn’t mean that you have to die here, Grant.” Skye shot back, clearly getting upset with him. “What happened to wanting a life for yourself and getting everyone out for me? I know for a fact that Coulson and Simmons will make it to where there’s no way for me to survive. How am I supposed to live when an entire world’s against you?”

“Why does any of that matter when I’ll be dead in a matter of days?”

“You won’t if we find you a way out. And Fitz is the key to that.” Skye pointed at the door. “Don’t give up and you’ll be able to see the light of another day.”

Grant fell silent and he eventually nodded, the flames dying away once more, “I assume that you’re right.” he muttered. “I’ll probably end up hating myself if I die without trying to save myself.” He looked at the iron door once more, “But it doesn’t mean that I have hope. I’ve never had it.”

Skye took his hand and gently pulled him from the door, “This time, let us help.” she stated. “You’re just going to hurt yourself even more if you try to burn down that door.”

He went to say something, but the look in Skye’s eyes made him remain quiet. He nodded once more and stepped to the side, allowing Skye and Mack to handle the door.
“You better prepare to get to Fitz.” he stated, looking at Simmons as he sat on the floor. “You’re probably the only one of us that can truly get through to him.”

Simmons looked at Grant with a frown, “I suppose you’re right. Don’t need your help here.” She turned and left him sitting there without another word.

Grant sighed and held his head in his hands, trying to stop the oncoming headache. He guessed that the Framework was trying to take him down once and for all. He probably didn’t have long now. Maybe another day or two. He hoped that he just had long enough to help fulfil his promise to Skye.

It was true that he no longer cared for himself. But maybe as long as Skye and the others were safe, he could die happy. Maybe then, he would truly find peace.

But now wasn’t the time for that.

Grant looked up as he heard the door swing open to reveal Fitz standing there with a scowl on his face. He jumped up as Skye and Mack stepped backwards, neither of them sure of what to say.

Fitz glared at them, “So the Director in all his fallen glory sends his dogs after me.” he stated coldly, taking a step out of the safe room. “I really was hoping that you had died in that blast. Especially after what you did to Ophelia. You bastards all deserve to burn in hell.

Now, tell me. Why the hell are you here?”

Chapter End Notes

So they're finally at Fitz. Now it's only a matter of if they can get through to him or not. Also, Grant's quickly getting worse. (The nosebleed idea was totally from Bioshock Infinite btw.) Can they find him a way out before it's too late? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
This Pain Persists, I Can't Resist

Chapter Summary

The final 'showdown' against Fitz.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Grant stepped forward with a hardened expression on his face, “You don’t hear yourself right now, do you?” he asked, his voice calm and flat. “This isn’t you, Fitz. It’s far from it.”

A muscle twitched in Fitz’s face as he studied Grant’s beat-up form, “I still don’t know why you claim to know me.” he stated coldly. “You spout nonsense, hoping that I’ll believe it somehow. SHIELD has you deluded.” He stopped and looked at Skye, Mack, and Simmons, “And I’ll tell you this: If you believe this man’s lies, then you’re as stupid as he is. He’s manipulated you in order to turn you against Hydra.”

“I-I’d never lie to them.” Grant looked off to the side and lowered his voice, “Not again.”

“I’m not the villain here, you are.” Fitz continued, ignoring what Grant had said. “You come and blow up my building. After you have the audacity to attack and almost kill Madame Hydra. How many do you plan to hurt and kill in this ‘plan’ or whatnot of yours?”

“How does any of that matter when this world isn’t real?!” Simmons snapped, stepping forward much to Grant’s surprise. “It doesn’t matter who dies here as long as it isn’t one of us! The people you surround yourself with are nothing more than computer programs. Fitz…” she trailed off and a hurt look formed on her face. “What happened to you?”

“I assume that you’re the Simmons woman he talked about.” Fitz stated, casting a glare towards Grant. “I’ll say this only one more time, I have no idea to who the hell you are. I don’t know any of you. All I know that you’re a bunch of criminals trying to take down what Ophelia and I built. Nothing more, nothing less. I don’t know what you hope to achieve here, but you won’t get it. There’s only four of you against an entire regime. Even the entirety of SHIELD can destroy what Hydra has become. You are fools to believe that you can win.”

Simmons’ face fell and tears started to build up in her eyes, “What has she done to you?” she asked, walking towards Fitz. “What has she turned you into, Fitz? You’re the very person that you would hate. Why can’t you remember who we are?”

Skye’s throat grew dry as she realized Simmons was getting too close to Fitz. Honestly, there was no telling to what this Fitz would do. This Fitz wouldn’t think twice about hurting one of them. He had already had Grant imprisoned, what more would he do?

“Jemma, I wouldn’t,” Skye began, but she stopped as she realized that nothing she could say would stop Simmons from getting close to Fitz. She looked towards Mack with a worried expression on her face, but they didn’t say anything.

“Fitz, this isn’t you.” Simmons continued, stopping when she was just a foot away from the man.
“AIDA is controlling you. This is basically brainwashing. She’s got you how she wants you to be. This is all against your will, Fitz. Please. We got through to the others, why can’t we get through to you?”

Fitz’s face hardened and he looked at Simmons with his cold, dead eyes, “Again, I have no idea what you’re talking about.” he stated emotionlessly. “Your Director has you fooled. He has you all trapped in some kind of fantasy that you all hope is real.”

“I may hate Ward with every fiber of my body, but I know he’d never make any of this up. He’s not capable of such.” Simmons said through gritted teeth. “This world is just a computer program. Madame Hydra, Ophelia, AIDA, whatever you want to call her, has us all trapped in here, Fitz. We’re not supposed to be here. We’ve got to get out of here and destroy this place. The Framework is just a creation of AIDA’s deranged mind. Fitz, please listen to me.”

He didn’t respond, he just glared at her.

“Fitz, I,”

Simmons was cut off as Fitz sent his hand across her face, sending her to the ground and causing her to yelp in pain. She held her now-red cheek as she looked up at him, seeing him tower over her with a disgruntled look on his face, “What’s happened to you?”

Grant immediately went into autopilot, launching himself forward and ramming into Fitz to send him to the ground. “Look at yourself, Fitz!” he yelled, pinning him against the floor. “You’d never hurt Simmons! Never!” Even though Grant hated Simmons, he still didn’t want to see her get hurt. Especially by Fitz.

“Get off of me!” Fitz screamed, struggling to reach inside of his suit jacket. “Get your filthy hands off of me!

“Just stop and think!” Grant cried, having a hard time believing that he had Fitz of all people pinned to the ground. “Think of all we’ve been through! It may not be the best, but it still means something! A part of you still has to remember who we are. I-”

A shot rang out and Grant suddenly slumped to the ground, causing everyone to panic. Skye and Mack immediately ran over to Grant as Fitz scampered backwards and dropped the gun. Fear shown in the man’s face as gears started to turn in his head, watching as the two agents helped to sit Grant up.

“I-I didn’t mean to!” he stammered. He looked at the blood pooling from Grant’s stomach and realization shone in his eyes, “Oh my God, Grant. Wait, what am I doing where…” he trailed off as fear overtook him.

“Good to see you, buddy.” Grant slurred, managing to crack a small smile. “It’s been a while.”

“Grant, try not to talk.” Skye said, putting pressure on his wound. “We need to slow the bleeding.”

“I’ll be fine… Think I heal fast.” Grant’s eyes fluttered shut. “I just wanna sleep…”

“It won’t heal if the bullet’s still in there.” Mack stated, casting a quick glance towards Fitz, whom of which seemed to be almost in a panic attack. “We’ve got to get it out.”

“We don’t have time.” Simmons cut in, still holding her cheek. “Soldiers will probably storm this area soon. We,”
“I’ll put out a distress call. Hopefully the others will get it and will come.” Skye stated sternly, trying to not let her emotions get the best of her. “Hopefully, Grant’s powers will keep him alive that long. And I don’t know if Fitz truly remembers everything or not. He... He may go back to being the Doctor if we’re not careful.”

“I-I didn’t mean to!” Fitz exclaimed once again, a faint tremble to his body. “I can’t, I can’t-”

A high-pitched squeal rang out and Skye and Mack looked up to see Simmons pointing an ICER at him, a scared look on her face.

“I didn’t want him hurting himself.” Simmons said through her oncoming tears, her hands shaking. “Or I didn’t want t-that other him hurting us, if that’s what you can call it.” She dropped the ICER and quickly went to crouch beside the unconscious Fitz. “I’m sorry.” she muttered, taking his hand.

“I'm sure that he'll understand.” Mack stated, watching as Grant's breaths grew shallow and ragged. “And if we don't get Ward help soon, he won't make it. He can't heal if the bullet’s still in the wound, I assume. And I know that you're in no condition to pull a bullet out of him. We need to retreat. We've got what we came for.”

Skye nodded with tears in her eyes, “I'll call Coulson and get him to send a team.” she said, giving Grant's hand a squeeze. “We've come so far, we can't lose anyone else now.

Especially not Grant. I don't want to lose him again.”

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, there you go. Fitz ends up shooting Grant and snaps out of it at the last second. Grant can't heal because of the bullet still being in the wound. I'll get fluffy again eventually. Just not now. Keep the comments and kudos coming! (And updates may be far between starting tomorrow. My classes start back.)
(A Couple of Hours Later)

Grant groaned as he peeled his eyes open, immediately closing them again to shield them from the harsh, white light from above. He heard muffled voices in his ears as he struggled to sit up, feeling far too weak. But a gentle hand pushed him back down.

“Don’t. You don’t need to start bleeding again on us.”

Grant opened his eyes again to see Skye hovering over him. He cracked a small smile as his hand went instinctively to his injured side, “Where am I?” He looked around the room, “And where’s Max?”

“You’re in the infirmary back at the base. And Max is with Hope and some of the other kids, so don’t worry.” she began, going to pull up a chair so she could sit beside him. “What do you remember?”

“I… I remember wrestling Fitz to the ground after he slapped Simmons.” Grant stated, carefully sitting up so he could see Skye better. “Everything gets pretty hazy after that.”

Skye nodded slightly in response. She expected that Grant wouldn’t remember what had happened, and that only made telling him so much harder. “Fitz shot you.” she began to explain slowly. “You held out long enough for us to retreat and get you back here.”

“Fitz? Is he okay?” Grant asked, his eyes locking onto Skye’s. “Did we get him?”

She nodded again, “He’s down the hall. Simmons ICEd him so he wouldn’t hurt himself. Seems as though him shooting you got him to snap out of it.” she answered lightly. “He’s okay, though. He woke up about an hour ago with a bad migraine. Simmons is in there trying to explain the situation to him. Hopefully, we’ll get out of here soon.”

“Yeah, that’s if I can get out as well.” Grant suddenly pushed himself out of the bed and tore the IV from his hand, much to Skye’s surprise. “We need to go now. There’s no telling to what Hydra’s doing in retaliation.”

Skye stood up and got in front of Grant so he wouldn’t leave the room, “Whoa, you just had surgery to dig a bullet out of your stomach, Grant.” she stated harshly, pointing to his gut. “You’re not going anywhere right now.”

“We don’t have time for this, Skye!” Grant snapped in response, lifting up his shirt and pulling away the bandages to show that there was no wound. Only an inch-long scar remained from where the bullet had been pulled out. “I’m fine, we don’t have to worry about that.”
“What?” Skye gaped at the absence of a wound. When Grant said that he healed fast now, she had no idea that he had meant this fast. She shook her head and looked him dead in the eyes, “And what are we supposed to do now?” she asked quietly, taking a step towards him. “Now that we have Fitz back, what’s our next step? It’s probably not hard for the rest of us to get out, but what about you? I’m not leaving you here, Grant.”

Grant sighed and wrapped an arm around Skye’s torso, drawing her close, “I don’t know.” His voice cracked slightly. “To be honest, I may have said that I no longer wanted to live, but I’m scared shitless now. I can’t stomach the thought of dying again, Skye. Not when you’ve finally come back to me.” He leaned down and pressed a kiss to the top of Skye’s head, “Please, help me find a way out, Skye.” he whispered, his voice beginning to become full of fear. “I… I can’t die again.”

He pulled away from her, “Please.” he begged. “I don’t care what it takes to get out. I just want to survive. And I have no idea of how to do that anymore.”

Skye bit her lip, unsure of what to say to Grant. On one hand, she was glad that he had found the will to live again. Especially for her. But on the other, she was afraid of what he would do to ensure his survival. Grant wasn’t the most stable man on the planet, so there was no telling to what he would do.

She knew that he wouldn’t betray them again, but she didn’t know what he was capable of now. Especially with his newfound powers in the mix. She didn’t want him turning into a monster at the very last second just because he refused to die.

“We’ll find some way.” she replied, taking another step towards him and reaching up to kiss him on the lips. “Then we’ll find that house you want away from everything. We’ll find you that dog to replace Max.”

Grant blinked and looked at her with a confused expression, “What are you going at?”

She sighed, “I’ve been thinking.” she began. “I need a break from SHIELD, especially after this shitshow. I’m thinking once we’re out of here and in the clear, I’m leaving with you.”

“Wait,” Grant paused and gaped at her. “You sure? T-That’s probably not the best option at this point. Especially with what the others think about me.”

“Do you think I give a damn about what everyone else says?” she asked, placing her hands on her hips. “I don’t. And besides, it’s what I want. I can’t keep doing this SHIELD thing forever. I’m tired of getting fucked over every time I think we’re in the clear. I just need to be somewhere where I can be normal for once.”

Grant let out a small laugh, “You realize that we’re not quite the most normal people, right?” he asked. “It’ll be hard for two Inhumans for act normal.”

“And that’s if your powers transfer over into the real world if we find you a way out.”

“I don’t really care either way.”

Skye smiled, “That’s probably a good attitude to have, right?” she questioned. “Especially with where we’re at.”

“Look, I don’t mind you coming with me. I wouldn’t mind the company, especially since it’s you.” Grant continued, reaching over and taking her hand. “But we’ve got to find a way out first, and I feel like Fitz might have some answers.” He began to lead her out of the room and towards where he could hear Simmons’ voice, “Maybe we’ll be out of here by tomorrow if we’re lucky. Considering I
don’t have long.”

“Grant, we’ll find a way, I promise. It may be complicated, but there’s always a way.”

Grant nodded numbly and let go of Skye’s hand before they went into the room where Fitzsimmons were located. They didn’t know of their rekindled relationship just yet. And they didn’t need to.

Fitz jumped up as soon as he saw Grant come into the room, “Ward!” he exclaimed. “I—I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to!”

“Don’t.” Grant stated, raising a hand for Fitz to stop. “It’s not your fault, you weren’t yourself. If anything, blame that robot lady or whatever. And besides, I’m fine.” He lifted his shirt to show the newly-formed scar, “I heal fast.”

Fitz blinked and shook his head, “J-Jemma told me to why you’re here, even though there were many, uh, harsh words on her end.” he stammered. “I don’t understand, Coulson killed you. Your body was destroyed when that warhead blew Hive up.”

“I don’t understand either.” Grant said with a shrug. “All I know is that my conscious was transferred here somehow. I guess it was when this place was created, I don’t know. It made it seem like I was always here, creating a false life for me. But I started to see through the cracks, now the program’s trying to get rid of me.”

“Get rid of you?”

“I’m dying. I probably have two days left. At the most.” Grant gulped and ran his hands through his hair, “And I have no idea of how to get out.”

Fitz turned and shook his head, “I know of a backdoor the rest of us can use to get out, but it won’t work for you. Considering you don’t have a body.” he stated. “There’s nothing for you to return to.”

Grant’s shoulders slumped, “Don’t remind me.”

“Fitz, is there a possible way for Grant to return?” Skye spoke up, trying to take over for Grant before he got upset again. “Like, is there any way?”

“It’s impossible.” Simmons spat, cutting in. “He doesn’t have a body, he—“

“Jemma, please.” Fitz stated harshly. “I don’t think Ward’s a problem here. And don’t you think we treated him rather harshly last time? Maybe I want to help.”

“Fitz,”

“I want to help, Jemma. It’s complicated, but I want to help.”

Fitz turned back to Grant and scrunched up his face in thought, “My memory’s a little fuzzy right now, but I think AIDA was working on something. No, she was making me do it.” He rubbed a hand down his face, “I don’t know if she’s used it yet, considering you practically crippled her, but it still should be there.”

Grant looked up and blinked, “What do you mean?” he asked, taking a step towards the engineer. “Is it a way to get me out?”

“I-I think it was a way to create herself a real body in the real world as opposed to a robotic one.” Fitz continued, scratching at the back of his head. “Considering you two are both code here, I think it
would work for you as well.”

A look of disbelief appeared on Grant’s face as he worked to comprehend that there was actually a way out for him. “Well, where is it!?” he demanded, a little more forcefully than he meant to. “Please tell me it’s close.”

“I think it’s back at the Triskellion in the penthouse AIDA used.” Fitz answered. “But getting back there is going to be a huge problem. I’m not the Doctor or whoever I was anymore.

AIDA will see right through me and we won’t be able to get what we need. She’ll tear us down before we can even get started.”

Chapter End Notes

So Skye tells Grant of her plans for once they get out. And there is a way for Grant to get out, but it's a matter of whether or not they can get back into the Triskellion. (Of course I'm using the Looking Glass machine.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
“But, but we could most definitely try something, though. If you really want to go through all of the risks.”

Grant raised an eyebrow, “And how are you planning on doing something?” he asked, staring straight at Fitz. He was really hoping that the engineer would be able to come up with a plan that could get him to that machine. That machine was Grant’s ticket out of here, and he wasn’t about to let it slip through his hands.

Fitz shrugged and sat down on the edge of the bed, “We’ll probably be in the clear to get up to the penthouse.” he began. “You act like you’re my prisoner again or whatnot and I escort you up there personally. Maybe a few SHIELD agents could dress as my person guards. That’s the easy part. The challenge is getting past AIDA.”

“You think she’s still alive?” Skye asked, her gaze shifting between Grant and Fitz. “I mean, Grant did knock her out of an elevator several stories up. And probably severely burned her at the same time.”

“Well, she was pretty beat up.” Fitz answered. “I remember that. But of course, she’s still alive. It’s her world after all, she can do whatever the hell she wants to do. She’s just trying to hold out long enough here to allow herself time to go through the Looking Glass program. I don’t know how much time we have until she does so. I’m afraid she’s probably close to going through it. And I don’t know what will happen to the machine after that.”

So we need to get there before she does so and stop her. And hopefully kill her at the very same time.” he continued. “So we need to go today, no matter how late it already is.”

“She’s an AI, Fitz, how the hell are we supposed to kill her?” Simmons questioned, giving him a disproving look. “She’ll just reform or whatnot.”

“That’s the thing, we’re in her realm. The only way to truly defeat her is from the outside.” Fitz sighed and shook his head, “We probably can subdue her long enough here in order to get Grant out and then get all of us to the backdoor. Even shutting down the Framework program won’t kill her. She’s probably got multiple LMDs out there for her to jump into. And that’s if she doesn’t manage to create herself a real body.” He paused and looked at Grant, “Even though the Looking Glass is a way out, there’s no telling to what it could do to you.”

Grant frowned, “Wait, what?” he asked, his face falling. “What do you mean it’ll do something to me?”

“AIDA and I… We used the Darkhold to power the machine.” Fitz answered slowly. “It’s
physically impossible to create a human body without some otherworldly force involved. So the Darkhold had to be involved.”

“The Darkhold? Isn’t that demonic book that created this place?”

Fitz nodded, “And probably the very thing that brought you back to life.” he stated. “It has unforeseen implications. That’s probably why you’re suffering the way you are. The Darkhold brought you back and now you’re paying the price. And the Framework is treating you like a virus because you aren’t supposed to be here. And there’s no telling to what it could do if we use it to give you a body.”

Grant’s face fell even more, “I thought you said it was a way to bring me back?!” he almost snapped. “What are you trying to say now?!”

“Well,” Fitz gulped. “It is a way to bring you back, Ward. But I don’t know what that book could do to you. I think AIDA intended it to give her powers when she went through, but you’re already Inhuman. So I don’t know what will happen to you. It’s a way, but it’s a damn risky one at that.”

Skye’s stomach grew cold and she turned to face Grant. “Grant, are you sure this is what you want?” she asked, placing a hand on his shoulder. “I know that you want a way out, but at what cost? Are you really willing to let that thing do something to you in order for you to survive? Is it really worth it?”

Grant’s shoulders slumped and he pulled away from Skye, unsure of what to say. He really wanted to survive, he had grown past the point of wanting to die again. But was he really willing to let a demonic force create a body for him? Would he even be himself anyone if he went through with this?

“I… I don’t know. It’s true that I want the hell out of here, but what’s the use of doing so if I don’t know what’s going to happen to me?” he questioned sadly. “I… I don’t know what the hell to do anymore.” He turned away from the three and faced the wall, “I need some time to think. I… I….”

He trailed off as static began to roar in his ears again.

“Grant, I’m serious. I really do want to get married one day. I mean it. I know that now’s not the greatest time to do so, but we could seriously do it eventually.”

“You sure?”

“Hell yeah, I’m sure. Just think about it. A quiet life out somewhere where no one can bother us. Enough room for you to have as many dogs as you want. And maybe, when we’re comfortable enough, we could try to have a kid. Maybe.”

“That’s a pretty big commitment.”

“Grant, it’s time for us to settle down. I don’t want to do this spy thing anymore, especially after everything that Hydra’s done. I want to be normal for once. Don’t you?”

“Yeah, I guess that you’re right.”

“You promise that we’ll settle down as soon as this is all over?”

“Promise.”

“Grant? Are you okay?”
Grant groaned and blinked, leaning against the wall for support as everything came back into focus. He took a sharp breath and turned to face Skye, “Yeah. I’m okay.” he breathed. “Just… Just another headache.”

Skye frowned and pointed at Grant’s face, “Your nose, Grant. It’s bleeding again.”

“Huh?” Grant wiped his nose and he found blood staining the back of his hand. He shook his head, “It’s… It’s nothing.”

“Grant, it’s not nothing!” Skye almost snapped, taking a step towards him. “You know that you’re dying, that’s only a sign that it’s getting worse!”

Grant’s shoulder’s slumped again, “Yeah, it is.” he mumbled. He didn’t want to mention the hallucination to Skye, it was only a reminder of what he probably couldn’t achieve. Even if he could get out of here, there was still no telling to what the Darkhold could do to him. But, truly, it wouldn’t hurt to try. He was probably dead either way. And really, could the Darkhold screw him up even more than he already was?

“I’ll do it.” he stated coldly, wiping at his bloody nose again as he stared straight at Fitz. “Take me there.”

Fitz stood to his feet, gaping at Grant, “You’ll seriously do it?” he asked, his voice a mere croak. “I said there’s no telling to what will happen to you.”

“And I’ll be dead if I don’t try!” he snapped, fire filling his eyes. “I might as well do something.”

“Grant, are you sure?” Skye asked, walking towards him. “I… I don’t want anything happening to you.”

“Skye,” Grant began, looking her dead in the eyes. “Yeah, I don’t know what’s going to happen, but I have to try if I want to survive. That’s who I am, right? I’m a survivor. And I’ve gotta be willing to do whatever it takes.” He took a sharp breath, placing his hands on her shoulders, “I’m sorry, but I have to do something. Hopefully, everything will go the way we want it and I’ll be okay. Then we’ll see about that calm life.”

Fitzsimmons looked at one another, but chose to remain silent.

“Grant, are you sure? Is this what you want?”

Grant nodded, “Yes, I’m sure. It… It doesn’t hurt to try, right?” he asked. “And, maybe, if it if does work, I can see about helping you all get out from the other side.

And maybe I can be the hero after all.”

Chapter End Notes

Of course things aren’t going to be easy, right? But Grant’s going to go through with it after all since he really has nothing to lose now. Hopefully things will work out…. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Grant finally makes it to the machine.

Now, no one else was a fan of the plan at all, despite it being the only way possible to get Grant out. But, unsurprisingly, the only main complaint against the plan was that it would bring him back to life, everyone having a differing reason to why they didn’t want it or were afraid of it happening.

Coulson and Simmons just didn’t want Grant being resurrected. Fitz and Mack were afraid of the consequences of doing so. And Skye was so afraid that something would go wrong and she would lose him all over again. She also feared that the power of the Darkhold would just end up turning Grant into a monster in the very end.

But, truly, Grant didn’t care at this point. He at least wanted to go through with the plan so he could say that he at least tried to save his own life. And he didn’t have much time to go through with it. He estimated that he had two days left at the most, so they had to leave for the Triskellion today. Even though it was getting late.

Fitz’s plan wasn’t the best overall, but he knew that it would work. He would take Grant and Skye, alongside a few SHIELD agents posing as Hydra guards, acting as though he had ‘captured’ them. Trying his best to keep up the Doctor façade. That was the only way he knew he could get them up to the penthouse considering the Triskellion was more than likely on a tight lockdown. Now, Fitz couldn’t get them up there, but the Doctor could. Fitz just hoped that he could keep that mask on long enough for fool the soldiers into thinking he was still who they thought he was.

They wasted no time getting things together in order to leave for the Triskellion. And it helped since there were really no good-byes to be made. But there was only one in particular that sent Grant spiraling into tears.

“I-I don’t wanna leave him, Skye.” Grant sobbed, burying his head into Max’s scruff. “He can’t be replaced. He doesn’t understand what’s going on. He doesn’t know that I’m not coming back.”

“Grant,” Skye began slowly, placing a gentle hand on the man’s shoulder, “You do know that he’s not real, right?”

“He’s real to me!” Grant snapped, running his hands through the shepherd’s fur. “I-I know that he’s just a computer program, but h-he’s always been there.” he hiccupped, tears streaming down his face.

“I’ll find you a dog just like him when we settle down. You can name him Max as well.” Skye said, trying to make light of the situation. She hated to see Grant like this; he was about to lose one of the only friends he had.

“But… But he won’t compare to Max, though.” he sniffed, sitting up slightly so the dog could lick
him in the face. “No dog will. You’re a good boy, Max. I love you.” he cooed, turning his attention to the dog. “Be good for everyone here. Keep Hope company for me, okay?” He ran his hand down the top of Max’s head and kissed it as Skye helped him stand up, “You’re a good boy, right?”

Max blinked at him and barked, his tongue hanging out of the side of his mouth.

The sight only caused Grant to break down even further to the point where he had to lean on Skye for support. And Skye didn’t know if this was due to his dwindling condition or the fact that he and Max were so close together. She had a strong feeling that it was the latter.

“It’ll be okay.” she whispered, kissing him lightly on the cheek. “I know it’s hard, but it’s something that has to be done. We’ll get a dog or two when everything’s all said and done. But we have to focus on getting you out of here first. Okay?”

Grant hiccupped again and sniffled, pulling away from Skye, “O-Okay.” He turned at looked at Max, giving him one, last smile as the dog barked once more.

“Be good, boy. I love you.”

(Later)

“God, they’re so gullible.” Fitz muttered as he pulled Grant and Skye into the penthouse. “I barely did a thing and they still believed that I am the Doctor.”

“Then that’s a good thing.” Skye commented, looking around the room with a disproving gaze. “Just makes things a whole lot easier on our end. And why is it so quiet?”

Fitz shrugged, “The guard did say that AIDA isn’t here.” he stated, leading them further into the penthouse. “I have a bad feeling about that. This is where the doctors were taking care of her long enough for her to be able to use the Looking Glass machine. Considering she isn’t here, that probably means that she’s already used it.” He stopped and looked towards Grant with a grave expression on his face, “That also means that you need to be ready to fight here if this thing works and you wake up on the other side. And there’s no telling to what that machine has done to her.”

“Or what it’ll do to me.” Grant answered coldly. “But don’t worry, I’m ready to burn that bastard to nothing. Not just for what she put me through with this place, but for trapping you two in here. That’s more than enough reason to put her six feet under.”

“Grant, don’t go crazy with revenge on us.” Skye began, walking forward and placing a hand on his shoulder. “Especially considering that we don’t know what the Darkhold’s power is going to do to you. Don’t go crazy with wanting to kill AIDA, that may cause something even worse to happen to you. Remember, I want you in one piece when the rest of us get out.”

Grant scoffed and kissed her on her cheek, “I plan on being myself when I get out. I’ll see to that.”

Fitz’s eyes widened and he sputtered for air, “S-So you two are back together?” he asked incredulously. He looked at Skye for an answer, “I figured that something was up, but what changed?”

Skye shrugged, “I… I guess this place has made me see him in a different light is all. I realized that
he isn’t that guy anyone and he just needs some love and support.” She smiled as Grant blushed, “And besides, he’s a total sweetheart. I don’t think he’d hurt any of us anymore. He just wants a quiet life now.”

“Yeah.” Grant nodded and sighed, “I don’t want to be that guy anymore. Hell, I want out of all of this violence and shit. I want a quiet life in the country somewhere with about three or four dogs.”

“Easy, there, tiger. That’s too many dogs.”

“You can never have too many dogs.”

“Four’s a lot. Especially if you’re wanting more shepherds.”

“So?”

Fitz rolled his eyes and cleared his throat to get their attention, “Nice to see that you two are on good terms again, but we really need to get going if you want to get out of here.” He turned and began towards a back room, ushering for them to follow, “I need to get Skye back to the others and we need to make it to the backdoor. So we need to do this now.”

He led them to a table in the room that looked like some kind of medical device and he started to tap away at a computer, “Just as I thought.” he began. “She did use this just a few hours ago. Probably right after your attack. So, you’ll have to fight her, Grant. Be careful.”

Grant gulped and looked at the machine, knowing that these were his last few moments in the world. To be honest, he was afraid. There was no telling to what he would be like on the other side. And that’s if it actually worked.

“Grant, are you sure that you want to do this?” Skye asked quietly. “You don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

He stared at the machine for a few, quiet moments before turning towards Fitz and giving the engineer a confident nod.

“Fire it up. I’m ready.”

Chapter End Notes

And I'm so sorry for that part with Max, but it had to happen. Despite me tearing up as I wrote it since I'm really sensitive when it comes to dogs. But at least Grant's at the finish line. But will the machine work for him? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
On the Other Side

Chapter Summary

Grant goes through the machine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Grant looked back to the machine and gulped, clenching his fists by his sides, “So what do I need to do?” he asked.

Fitz typed a few commands into the computer before getting up, “If I recall correctly, you’ll have to get undressed. It has to be able to read your whole body in order for it to create one for you.” he began to explain. “I know that it’s awkward, but I think the scanner covers your more private parts if you’re worried about me seeing anything.

And I don’t think that it will take that long. Maybe a few minutes at the most.” he continued, not seeing Grant blush and shy away. “Once the machine has your programming and specs, you’ll be transferred into the system and your consciousness will fade from your current body. So… So, I suggest that you say your goodbyes now. There’s no telling to when we’ll be in contact again.”

Grant turned towards Skye with a small, yet sad, smile on his face, “You heard the man.” he stated, taking a step towards her. “I guess this is goodbye. Hopefully for now if things go the way we want it to go.” He wrapped his arms around her and drew her close, “But remember, I’ll still love you no matter what happens. Even if this machine turns me into a monster. The human part of me will still love you.”

“Don’t do anything stupid before we can get to you.” Skye mumbled into his chest, tears seeping into her eyes. She was so afraid that she would end up losing him, either it be by death or him turning into something else. “I need you in one piece when we find you.”

He chuckled lightly and pressed a kiss to the top of her head, “Don’t worry, I’m not going to be stupid. The most reckless thing I might end up doing will be killing that asshole of an android when I find her. I need to make sure that you all can get out.”

Skye smiled slightly and leaned up to kiss him on the lips, “I love you, Grant Ward. Don’t you forget that either. Don’t mess this second chance up. You don’t need another reason for Coulson to kill you.”

“He needs to learn that I’ve already paid the ultimate price for my sins.” Grant muttered, kissing her lips again. “He needs to leave it alone so we can live a quiet life. That’s all that I want.”

She pulled away, “Well, hopefully we can get that once that’s all said and done.” she stated quietly. “If this does all work out and something doesn’t throw a wrench into our plans.” She smiled once more, “Please be careful. I don’t want to lose you again.”

He nodded and smiled back, “I will.” Taking a sharp breath, he turned around to face Fitz again, “I’m ready.”
“Okay.” Fitz began, pressing a few more buttons. “Go ahead and get undressed and get on the table. And don’t worry, I won’t look. I imagine Skye would want to, though.”

Grant blushed as Fitz adverted his gaze, busy on getting the machine fully booted up. He sighed and turned back towards Skye, grabbing the hem of his shirt and pulling it up over his head. He threw it aside and laughed slightly as he saw Skye eyeing his abs, “Don’t worry, you’ll get to see more soon enough. Well, if that book doesn’t screw it up in some way.”

Skye shook her head, a hot blush growing on her cheeks, “I really wish this was all in a different context.” she stated as Grant slipped off his boots and his pants. “And not a situation where your life is hanging in the balance.” She blushed again as Grant carefully slipped off his underwear, giving her a full frontal view, “It would be so much better.”

He nodded as he climbed onto the table, slipping himself under the machine, “Me, too.”

Fitz nodded as he realized that Grant was fully situated, “Okay, the machine’s good to go, I just need your go-ahead.” he stated. “Once this machine starts, there’s no going back. And remember, wait for us to get to the backdoor. Don’t rip us out of the machines. That’ll only do us harm. It may take a while. But just wait. You ready?”

“I…” He looked at Skye and gave her once last smile. “I’m ready, go ahead. Do it.”

The machine jolted to life as Fitz initiated the program. “Just close your eyes and relax. There’s no telling to where you’ll be when you wake up.”

“Hopefully not dead.”

Grant swallowed and closed his eyes as his body became unnaturally warm, and not from his own abilities. He could feel the darkness beginning to drag him down, hopefully into a new life. He swore he could hear Skye talking, but he couldn’t tell what she was saying; everything was spiraling into oblivion.


Until it all just went black.

Skye frowned as Grant’s body stilled and the machine went quiet. Her heart lurched as she looked to Fitz for an answer, “Did… Did it work?”

Fitz turned and shook his head, “I-I have no idea. The machine won’t tell me anything. I don’t know if his programming went to the other side or not.

I don’t even know if he’s still alive.”

(Elsewhere, Unknown)

Grant awoke with a start, finding himself on cold, hard concrete. His mind buzzed as he struggled to understand what had happened. “Skye.” he mumbled, trying to pull himself to his feet. “You there?”

He stumbled as he pulled himself up, as if his body was foreign to him. “That’s right. The machine. Did it work?” he thought, stumbling across the room. He stopped as something caught his attention out of the corner of his eye.
A mirror.

He turned and froze, absolute joy overcoming him. “I... I’m alive. But naked.” he thought. “It actually worked.” He poked at his naked body, noticing the complete lack of scars. “It feels weird though. Like I’m someone else. But I look like me. I still sound like me. Of course I feel weird, this body is technically new. I’m like a newborn.” He held his hand out, willing flames to flicker to life in his palm, “And I’m still Inhuman. I guess that machine copied every aspect of me. But does that mean my mind’s back in the right place? I know that I’ll never be normal, but is the psychosis gone? This world isn’t a computer trying to kill me. Maybe… Maybe I’m finally safe.”

He walked off from the mirror and wrapped his arms around himself, “I need clothes first, though. I may have fire in my veins, but I can still feel the cold even though I can tolerate it. I don’t like it. I really don’t. I feel defenseless. I don’t even know where the hell I am.”

A storage closet in the corner of the room caught his eye and he immediately went to it. And to his luck, it did contain some clothes in his size. He found that they were simply some kind of black spandex material. Almost like athletic clothing. But it would work for now. There weren’t even any shoes to wear. But, still, it would do.

“Again, where am I?” he questioned himself, leaving the closet and beginning to head towards the other room. “I have no idea where the others are either. I...”

His thoughts trailed off once he entered the next room, seeing just what it held.

The team.

They, minus Skye and Simmons, were all strapped to machinery. One spot was empty, though. And Grant immediately knew that was where Mace once stood. Now he was gone, never to return.

Grant’s stomach lurched at the thought as he began to walk towards the others, trying to think of a possible way to get them out without harming them. Fitz had told him not to rip them out and just wait. But Grant didn’t like that idea. He was afraid that something would happen.

He took another step towards them, but a sudden voice stopped him cold in his tracks.

“How the hell did you get here?”

Chapter End Notes

So the machine worked, but Skye and Fitz don’t know that. They fear that he may be dead, even though he’s perfectly alive. How will that turn out? Keep the comments and kudos coming!
I'm Losing Control

Chapter Summary

Grant faces off with AIDA...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So, he may not even be alive?”

Fitz shook his head and leaned against the machine to steady himself, trying not to look at the lifeless form on the table. “I can’t tell.” he muttered. “All the machine is giving me is an error message. It may have worked, or it may have not. I have no idea. The only way we’ll know if it worked is if we see him once we get through the backdoor. There’s no other way to tell, unfortunately. All of this may have been in vain.”

The ground trembled slightly beneath them as Skye’s lip quivered. She was trying to reign in her emotions because she knew that Grant wouldn’t want her to be like this. He would want her to be strong and get to the backdoor so she could survive.

Who knows, Grant could be alive on the other side after all and she’s worrying for nothing. But the error message sat like a rock in her stomach and it didn’t help that his lifeless Framework form was still lying on the table in front of her.

“What… What do we do now?” she asked quietly, looking straight at Fitz so she didn’t have to see the body.

Fitz sighed, “We take the guards and go. We get back to the base, get the others, and head straight for the backdoor. I have the location, hopefully it’ll work and AIDA already hasn’t discovered it. I feel like she’s the reason to why the machine fucked up.” he explained, turning away from the machine. “So we need to get there by nightfall. Today’s when we get the hell out of here.”

Skye’s eyes drifted to Grant’s body, “What do we do with him?”

“We’re not able to carry him back. We’ll… We’ll just have to leave him here. And besides, once the Framework’s down, that body will be destroyed.” He shook his head, “I know it’s not the best idea in case he’s really dead, but we don’t have a choice.”

“The guards can’t carry him?”

“I don’t want to cause an uproar at the base by bringing in Grant’s dead body. Someone might try to kill me for it. The programs here only see me as the Doctor, they don’t know who I really am. They’ll think I killed SHIELD’s Directors and they’ll revolt.” He sighed and looked down, “That’s not who I really am. AIDA fucked me over big time. I’ll never be able to live what I did down.”

“Fitz,” Skye began, taking a step forward and placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. “The Doctor wasn’t you. It was a version of you that AIDA created and forced you into. If anything, it was brainwashing.” she explained. “You’re not at fault for what happened. And besides, no one here is real. It doesn’t truly matter in the end.”
“But the guilt’s still real. I’m still technically the reason to why Mace died. Real or not, it still eats at you.”

“I think you and Jemma should take a vacation for a while or something once we’re out of here. Something to help you relax and get you readjusted to things.”

Fitz nodded slowly, “I’ll talk to her about it.” He paused and looked at her with a frown, “Wait, what were you talking about earlier when you mentioned plans to Ward earlier?”

Skye’s heart skipped a beat, “Ah, I didn’t think that I would have to explain that soon.” she answered. “… I’m thinking of leaving SHIELD for a while once we’re out. I want to help Grant settle back down in the world of the living and make sure things go right for him all things considered. I just need a break from things for a while, Fitz. It seems like we haven’t been able to catch a break lately. Hopefully going with Grant will give me just that.”

“Well,” Fitz took a breath, “I wasn’t expecting that, but I do see where you’re coming from. Everyone needs a break. And I guess Grant does need someone to guide him into a normal life, considering that he’s probably never had one.”

“Yeah. But we’ll keep in touch, it’s not like we’re completely disappearing or anything. You’re all welcomed to visit after we find somewhere to live. Okay, even though having Coulson or Jemma over may not be a good idea for a while.”

Fitz nodded again, “You’re probably right.” he stated. “There’s no telling to what Ward’s state of mind will be after all of this. Even if he’s alive.” He took another look at the body, “Come on, let’s get the hell out of here.”

Skye looked at Grant’s motionless body one last time, “I’m sorry for leaving you here, Grant.” she whispered before turning around and following Fitz out.

“I hope that you’re alright. Hold on, we’re coming.”

(Elsewhere)

Grant spun around and saw a brown-haired woman standing in the doorway of the room. She wore nothing but a robe and was glaring at him with a seething hatred in her eyes. Even though she looked slightly different, he knew that face anywhere.

AIDA.

“Huh. Guess Fitz was right about you going through after all.” he scoffed, frowning as she came closer.

“Again, how the hell did you get here?” AIDA hissed, glaring at him. “Only I was supposed to go through that damn machine. And it had to be you of all people.”

“You’re just upset that I sent you out of a window.”

“You almost ruined everything for me.” she growled, taking a few more steps forward. “My
programming was almost wiped out by your little stunt. There was almost not enough of my body for the machine to scan. You could’ve destroyed everything I built.”

“Oh, give me a fucking break.” Grant stated coldly, fire filling his irises. “You almost destroyed everything. You were the one that kidnapped majority of the main SHIELD team and imprisoned them. You were the one to brainwash them all into someone else. And you claim that I destroyed everything?

You’re also the reason to why I almost died again. You created this fucked-up world, causing me to be trapped in here. I’ve suffered for the past while because of it.” he continued. “I’m not the monster here.”

AIDA raised an eyebrow and cocked her head, “I know about you, Mr. Ward.” she began. “I know all about your betrayal and all those people you killed. I know all about how you hurt and vowed to destroy SHIELD. That makes you no better than me.

So, why are you trying to protect them after all that happened? They hate you. They want you dead. So why not unplug the Framework now and kill them to get revenge?” she crooned. “I have no use of it now that I have a real body. Why not get the revenge I know you crave?”

A muscle twitched in Grant’s face, “Because I’m not that monster anymore. He died long ago.” he stated coldly. “I may not like them, but that doesn’t mean I want them dead. And besides, I have two people I’m fighting for. That’s all the reason I need to help them. I made them a promise.”

“And what do you hope to gain from that? What you do doesn’t matter to them.”

“It may not, I don’t care at this point considering I’m alive.” Grant hissed, fire sparking from his fingertips. “But, again, I made a promise to two of them. I hope to fully regain their trust and be able to go off and live a normal life. I’m tired of this shit.”

“And what if I don’t allow that? I’m not letting them escape.”

Grant snarled and flames erupted in the palms of his hands, “Then I’ll have to fucking burn you alive!” he screamed, launching himself towards her. He fell to the ground as she suddenly disappeared and reappeared right behind him. “Shit. She did give herself powers.”

He groaned as he tried to pull himself to his feet, but the smell of ozone suddenly filled the air and he screamed out as something struck his side and shocked him. His vision went blurry as he fell back down. Several seconds passed before his head cleared and he pulled himself up, despite the pain in his side.

“The fuck did you do to me?” he moaned, holding his side. He looked down to see that his shirt was burnt and the skin beneath it was all but charred. “Electricity. Guess… Guess there’s only so much heat and stress my body can take. It may heal fast, but that’s gonna scar.” He moaned again as he took a wobbly step forward, looking up to see that AIDA had a smirk on her face.

“You may be powered, but I still outmatch you in every way possible.”

Grant managed another snarl and staggered towards the artificial woman, “You’re so full of it.” he spat, still gripping his burnt side. His eyes flared and flames shot out of his body, covering him like armor.

“Come on, bring it. And you better hope that I don’t lose control.

I’m not letting you walk out of here alive.”
So with this, there isn't much left. Maybe five chapters or so. I'm really hoping to wrap this up soon so I can get back to Fire in the Sky. (And I'll probably start another werewolf AU since it's almost October.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Watch it Crash Down

Chapter Summary

Everything starts winding down.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first thing that the rest of the team noticed when Skye and Fitz got back to the base was the complete lack of Grant. Coulson and Simmons were mainly relieved that they didn’t have to deal with him for a while, but they knew just what his absence meant. Grant was on the other side waiting for them.

“So, did it work?” Mack asked, quickly approaching the two as they came into the common room. “Is he through?”

Fitz shrugged and decided to answer, knowing that it would pain Skye to do so, “We… We have no idea if he went through or not. The machine decided to go into an error mode after his body stilled.” he explained. “So there’s a possibility that he’s dead. We have no idea. The best course of action is to go straight through the backdoor as soon as possible and shut this hell down.”

Coulson stepped forward, “What about AIDA?” he asked. “Where the hell is she?”

“The machine showed signs of previous use before we hooked Ward into it.” Fitz continued. “So there’s a high possibility that she’s gone ahead through and given herself a real body. And it’s possible that Ward will have to deal with her. There’s no telling where things will end up. There’s no telling to what we’ll find once we do go through the backdoor.”

“So there’s an outcome of three possible actions. AIDA kills Ward. Ward kills AIDA. Or Ward goes crazy due to the power of the Darkhold, kills AIDA, and then kills us in the end.” Simmons stated. “I don’t see any way around those three options.”

“Well, hopefully it’s the middle one.” Skye mumbled, turning away from the group. Her heart lurched as she saw Max paddling into the room, his tail going full-speed once he saw her. She bent down and ran her hands through his fur once he ran up to her, “Too much has happened for him to die again. Especially by that psycho’s hands.”

May took a sharp breath, knowing just how much Grant meant to Skye again, but she decided to stay quiet about it in case Coulson hadn’t picked up on it again. They needed to get out of here soon before things could go to hell all over again. This was possibly their only chance to get out of this hell.

She turned towards Fitz, “You do know where the backdoor is at, right?” she asked, hoping to speed things along. “I’d like to get the hell out of here as soon as humanly possible.”

Fitz nodded, “I am.” he answered. “All that matters now is if you all are ready or not. Considering… Considering there are people here that you will have to say goodbye to again, even if they don’t understand to why you’re doing so.” He shot Mack a knowing glance as the man’s face fell, “But,
honestly, it’s now or never. We need to get out of here now before AIDA realizes what is happening and locks our way out. And if she is on the other side, hopefully Ward will hold her off long enough for all of us to get through.”

“And why are we relying on Ward?” Simmons asked, crossing her arms. “Who’s to say that he won’t just take off and forget about us?”

“Because he made me a promise.”

Simmons frowned as she turned to see Skye rising to her feet, Max right next to her, “Huh?”

“Grant made me a promise that he’d help us get out of here, because it meant helping me and Fitz.” Skye stated coldly, glaring at Simmons. “He wouldn’t break a promise like that. Especially after everything that’s happened.”

“And you’re sure about that?” Coulson cut in. “You know that he’s not an honest man. He might’ve been saying that in order for you two to help him get out.”

“No, it’s not like that.” she protested. “He’s telling the truth. He wouldn’t ever lie to me. And besides, he’s never lied to me before. Even with his betrayal, he didn’t lie. He just hid what he didn’t want me to see.”

“Come on, we don’t have time for this.” May broke in. “We don’t have time to argue over someone like Ward. If he stays and helps, fine. He’s helped us so far. We don’t need to waste precious time arguing over old shit. Let’s go. Now.”

Fitz swallowed, “I… I guess that everything’s ready. Just get ready and meet back here.

It’s time to go.”

(Elsewhere)

Grant grunted in pain as he fell to the ground once more, “Why’re you doing this?” he slurred, clutching his burned side. “You’re not human. You’ve never been human, and you never will.”

AIDA snarled, her mind a mess of newfound emotions, “I am human in every way!” she snapped, stepping back as Grant rose back up on his feet. “You are the ones who oppressed me and used me!”

“This has nothing to do with me! Why fight me when all I want to do is protect the two people that matter the most to me?” he questioned, taking a shaky step forward. “Haven’t you ruined my life enough? If you hadn’t of touched that book, I’d still be dead. Maybe I’d be better off than I am now. I suffered because of that hell, and so did everyone else. What do you hope to gain from any of this?”

“Revenge. Closure.” she spat. “For everything I’ve been through. To show that I can’t be controlled.”

Grant flinched at the sound of those two sounds. The two words that ruined his life. Maybe if he had of just run away after Puerto Rico, he’d be okay right now. But no, he just had to keep going and keep getting himself into even more trouble.
“Trust me. Closure isn’t worth the trouble.” Grant stated, taking another step forward. “It only gets into more shit. I recommend that you stop it now before things just get worse for you. Closure will be your downfall.”

“Maybe it was yours, but it won’t be mine.”

“Bullshit. You’re so damn full of yourself, you can’t see your flaws. You’re a monster. Way so more than I ever was.” Grant continued. “You think you’re so great when all you do is destroy everyone else around you. You imprison people, enslave them, and kill them just because you want to feel powerful. That isn’t wanting to be human. I don’t know what that is.”

A muscle twitched in AIDA’s face, “I know who you are, Mr. Ward. How you’ve been treated your entire life. Wouldn’t you want power? To be above those who tortured you?”

He shrugged, “Tried it once, didn’t work out. Ended up with me dead and an alien parasite in my head.” he stated. “Wasn’t my thing.”

“Not everyone is cut out for it.”

“How about you shut up?” Grant growled, flames flaring from his eyes. “Why can’t you think of the pain you’ve caused so many? That hell you created? Most of those people weren’t real, but wasn’t their suffering real?” he asked. “That’s not power. That’s… That’s being an abomination. You wanted more for yourself than you did anyone else. You,”

He was cut off as he screamed out, another shock of electricity hitting him and knocking him right to the ground. Black spots danced on the edge of his vision and he knew that he couldn’t take another hit.

“Fucking shut up!” AIDA screamed, the air crackling around her as Grant struggled to bring himself to his feet. “I will win here! I will not lose!”

“I… I’d like to see you try.” Grant’s eyes flared again. He smirked slightly, “I won’t let you kill the people I once called friends. And I definitely won’t let you kill the woman I love.”

“I don’t think you…” AIDA trailed off as Grant’s body suddenly shuddered and erupted into flames. She frowned as the flames flattened against his skin, creating an armor-like substance across his body. And she didn’t even have time to think of where to teleport before Grant slammed straight into her and knocked her to the ground, some of the flames burning her skin. She screamed out as she truly felt pain for the first time.

The flames peeled away from Grant’s face and one of his hands as he pinned her to the ground by her throat, “I won’t let you get away. I may not want to kill anymore, but I’ll make an exception for you.

This is where you fall.”

Chapter End Notes

So hopefully I can finish this up soon if school doesn’t get in the way like it did last week. I’ve got like two fic ideas I want to try and one that I need to take off of hiatus. So maybe I can get things really flowing soon enough. Keep the comments and kudos
coming!
AIDA tried her best to sneer at Grant as the man pushed her further against the concrete floor, the flames of his skin getting way too close for comfort, “Is this what you really want? To burn another person to death?” she asked, stammering her way through her question. Why did she feel like this? What was this feeling deep within the pit of her stomach.

Grant’s eyes flared and he tightened his hold on her neck, “I don’t consider you as another person.” he growled. “You’re a selfish bastard who only cares for yourself. You were a robot to begin with. You were built. This wasn’t supposed to happen.”

“And does no one remember Ultron?” AIDA spat. “He was just supposed to be a servant, like I was. Then he rose to become something much greater. Like him, I don’t want to be stuck as a mindless servant for the rest of my life.”

“Then why become human?” Grant asked, not loosening his grip on her. “Why would you want to become mortal? As far as I know, you didn’t make yourself an immortal Inhuman? Wouldn’t it be better to be something that could be rebuilt again and again?”

“I wanted to be free. I can’t be controlled now. You can’t control a human so easily.”

Grant’s face slightly fell and he further tightened his grip, “Yes, you can. People can be controlled just as easily as a robot. They can be turned into practical robots.” he croaked, flames swirling deep in his eyes. “And there’s nothing that can be done about it. Because there will always be assholes that want to prey on the weak. To control those who can’t fight for themselves. Being human is not all good. And you go through all of that trouble to become one for what? For nothing. Because you have nothing going for you.”

“And why did you go through the trouble of coming back to life?” AIDA crooned, not taking her gaze off of him. “You don’t have anything going for you either.”

“I wanted a second chance. I wanted a chance to live a normal life.” Grant spat, the flames around his body crackling. “But I do have something going for me. I have someone willing to help me. You have no one. You don’t deserve any other chances. You’ve never even had a chance.” He tightened his hand once more and the flames began snaking towards his hand, ever so slowly towards the skin of AIDA’s neck. He smiled as her pupils shrunk in size and her body began to tremble.

“Is this fear I sense?” he asked coldly. “I don’t even have to look at you to know that you’re afraid. I can feel how your body reacts to what you fear. So how does it feel? And I bet you have no idea what it is, do you?”

She remained silent under his piercing gaze.
“That’s how it feels to be human. Emotions control our everyday lives. Fear drives us.” Grant continued. “You’ve never felt this way before. So you have no idea what it’s like to be human. And you never will.”

“So you’re just going to kill me?” she croaked out. “Is this how this ends?”

“Completely.”

Grant went to shoot flames towards her body, but he suddenly found himself falling as there was no longer anyone underneath him. He grunted as he hit the concrete and rolled to find AIDA standing right above him as the flames snuffed out on his body.

“I won’t let you do that. I won’t let you take everything away from you. You took the world I ruled. You took the man I loved. I won’t let you take anything else. I will get everything back.”

“Fitz doesn’t want you.” Grant stated, rising to his feet. “You brainwashed him! I want you to stay the fuck away from him.” The flames reappeared in the palms of his hands as he flexed them at his sides. “I want you to stay the fuck away from all of them. I don’t care what they say about me. I don’t want you hurting them anymore.”

He lunged towards her, but she teleported right behind him and grabbed him by his neck, hoisting him into the air, “Don’t think I won’t spare you.” she stated coldly. “And I won’t run either. This will end when you’re dead.”

A slight smile pulled at his lips, “You’ve been holding back on me. I’m offended.” he snarked. Flames burst from his back, knocking AIDA away. He dropped to his feet and spun around to face her as she rose, the front of her robe charred, “I like it when someone can put up a good fight. No matter who it is.”

“You’ve got a lot of control for someone who just got their powers.” she stated, looking him up and down. “That’s interesting.”

“I could say the same thing for you.” Grant shot back, cracking his knuckles as he took a step towards her. “Maybe I could thank that damn book. Maybe it leveled things out for me so I have full control.” The flames consumed his body again, “And I have to say, I do like it.”

“Don’t get so ahead of yourself, Mr. Ward.” AIDA chided, cocking her head at him. “That book wasn’t meant to bring people back to life. I was created from nothing. You weren’t. There’s no telling to how it corrupted your being.”

“I was already corrupted. You can’t mess me up even more.” The flaming mass that was Grant took another step forward, “And besides, shouldn’t it be able to corrupt you? It still created you. There’s still no telling to what it did to you.”

“As long as it gives me what I want, that doesn’t matter. And what are you doing to do if it turns you into what you most fear, Mr. Ward? I know that you fear the others thinking you as a monster again.” AIDA stated coolly. “You’re afraid that the Darkhold will turn you into that, right? I can see right through you.

Maybe you’re right and I’m not human. Maybe I’m not even Inhuman either.” she continued. “But that means you aren’t either. Maybe we’re both demons, considering what that book is. What a fitting end for someone like you.” She smiled, “To be turned into a demon. A monster’s end.”

Grant snarled and the air around them suddenly grew very, very hot. His flames shimmered and morphed into a bluish color, noting their intensity. “You have no right to talk about me like that.” he
growled, taking another step towards her. “I may be a demon, but that doesn’t mean I’m a monster. I’m not the monster here. You are.” He screamed out and the blue flames erupted from his body, surrounding him and AIDA. “But if I have to be a monster to kill you, then so be it.”

AIDA’s eyes widened in fear as she realized that she was surrounded by the white-hot flames. “But you can’t contain me, can you?” she croaked. She closed her eyes and tried to teleport away, but when she opened them she still found herself surrounded by the flames. “W-Why isn’t it working?!” she screamed, backing away from Grant. But she stopped as she realized she was about to back right up into the inferno around her. “Why can’t I run?!”

A deep laugh rumbled from the blue, flaming mass, “That’s fear.” Grant stepped towards her again, “You find yourself frozen in place, unable to move a muscle.” The flames around them suddenly came closer. “And now you’re trapped with nowhere to go. This is what happens when you mess with the people I care about. This is what happens when you brainwash them and make them into people they aren’t.” The flames came closer to her. “I don’t know what to call this. Karma? Vengeance? I don’t know. But it’s what you deserve.

And it’s what you asked for.”

With a flick of his wrist, the wall of flames swallowed them, consuming AIDA whole. Grant stepped back as the woman morphed into a pillar of flames, her screams dying away as she turned into nothing but ash. The flames died away to reveal nothing.

Grant let out a sigh of relief as the flames snuffed out on his body, revealing that his clothes had been burnt away. He stumbled as he turned to head back to the room where the others were, but his body suddenly very heavy and he felt very tired. He fell to the ground, clutching his still-burnt side.

Darkness danced at the edges of his vision as he swore he could hear talking from somewhere in the distance.


You’re all safe.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, maybe not as long as I wanted it, but at least the battle's over. All that's left is for everyone to get back together somehow. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
The team comes back to the real world.

“Is… Is everybody okay?”

“Yeah, I think so. I’ve got a migraine, but that’s probably normal, if that’s what you can call it.”

Fitz nodded and looked around the room, taking note of the set-up, “Yeah, probably.” he stated, looking over his three teammates. “That’ll do it to you.” He looked towards May, “You were in there the longest, you doing alright?”

May pressed the sides of her head and sighed, “Same as Coulson. Major migraine. And I’m a little shaky. But I could be worse.” she answered. She trailed off as she noticed the empty space on the end of the machines where no one had come out from, “At least we survived.”

“She’s already dealt with Mace, then.” Mack stated somberly, turning away from the machines. He noted the regret in May’s face, “Don’t blame yourself. You weren’t yourself back there. AIDA’s the one to blame. She’s the one that killed him, not you. You’re not responsible for what happened.” He looked towards Fitz, “Same as you. AIDA had us all brainwashed into people we weren’t. We can’t be blamed for what happened. As long as AIDA’s dead, it’s all in the past now. That’s what Mace would want, right?”

Coulson took a sharp breath, “Probably. He’d want everything cut off right at the source. And that’s AIDA.” He paused and looked around, “Wait, where is she?” he asked. “You’d think she’d know by now that we’re out. Something’s not right here.”

Fitz’s heart skipped a few beats as he realized what probably had happened if AIDA wasn’t here, but he wasn’t going to say anything just yet. More than likely, Grant had survived everything and had already killed the AI. And he wouldn’t put it past the man to brutally kill her for everything that had happened, so there was no telling what they would find if Fitz’s suspicions were correct.

“Maybe she’s gone.” Fitz stated, walking towards the room’s exit. “So maybe we’re finally free to leave. Hopefully Daisy and Jemma managed to get out and get a lock on this place. We can contact them to ensure they know where we’re at.” He continued walking out, “It’s time to leave this damn place and get back to normal. I…” he trailed off as he reached the main room outside, his eyes trailing to an unconscious form on the floor close to the far wall.

“Oh my God, Grant.”

Fitz immediately ran to the man’s side, crouching next to his bare, unconscious body. “He’s still breathing.” he noted. His eyes trailed to an area of scorched skin on Grant’s left side, which was pressed up against the cold concrete, “And where did this burn come from? It looks recent. I thought he couldn’t get burned. Something had to happen. Did he fight AIDA?”
“Yo, Turbo, you can’t just go running off like that. Especially when we have no idea to where the hell we are. We can’t…”

Fitz looked up to see the others standing a few feet away, all staring in horror at Grant’s body.

“Is he dead?” May asked, the only one stepping forward. “Did,”

“No, he’s still breathing.” Fitz cut in, returning his attention back to Grant. “He’s just unconscious.”

“And naked.” Coulson noted with a wrinkle of his nose. He looked around the room, “And what the hell happened to him anyways?”

“His side is severally burned. I think it’s healing as fast as it can, but it still looks bad.” Fitz began to explain, gently nudging Grant’s shoulder to try to wake him up. “I think he actually fought AIDA.”

“There’s a pile of ashes over here.” Mack announced, walking towards a charred spot on the flood a few feet away. He looked around, “And there’s a huge charred circle around this spot as well. I think it’s safe to say that he killed AIDA. Wouldn’t be surprised if he turned her into a walking bonfire.” He turned back around and narrowed his eyes at the burn on Grant’s side, “But I have no idea how the hell that happened. Turbo, didn’t you say that AIDA gave herself powers?”

“Yeah. I think that’s what she was wanting out of the Darkhold. But there’s no telling to what kind of powers she had. I just know they weren’t flame-base. We already know that Ward’s invulnerable to fire.” Fitz carefully explained. “But that’s in the past. She’s gone. Now we’ve got to worry about making sure he wakes up and getting the hell out of here.” He took a breath to steady himself, “Mack, Coulson, can you see if there’s something in here you can use to contact SHIELD? Maybe that way we can get a signal out to the others. May, help me with Ward. He’ll probably be in a whole lot of pain when he wakes up.”

“Good. I don’t have to be around him.” Coulson muttered, turning around and walking off without question.

“Jeez.” Mack shook his head and looked back to Fitz, “Yell if you need anything.” he stated. “But he probably won’t be a problem unless that book messed him up.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.” Fitz stated under his breath, returning his attention to Grant. He shook Grant’s shoulder again, “Hey, can you hear me?” he called out as May walked off to find Grant some cover. “Ward, er, Grant, are you okay? Wake up.”

Of course, nothing happened at first, but Fitz wasn’t just going to stop after one try. He needed Grant to wake up right now. It took a few attempts, but Grant’s eyes eventually started to flutter open, much to Fitz’s delight.

“Skye, don’t do that.” Grant mumbled, struggling to sit up. “Don’t wanna do that.”

“I’m not Skye.”

Grant groaned as he sat up and leaned back against the wall, unconsciously grabbing at his side. His eyes fully opened and the colored drained from it as he realized who was in front of him, “Fitz?”

Fitz smiled, “Yeah, it’s me.” he answered. “You made it.”

“Feel like shit, though.” Grant struggled to remember what happened, it all slowly coming back to him. “The bastard’s dead.” he mumbled, holding his side. “Lit her up like a firework. She won’t be coming back.”
“Good. That’s what I wanted to hear.”

Grant looked up to see May standing over him, holding out a blanket towards him. “T-Thanks,” he stammered, gently taking the blanket from her and wrapping it around himself to cover up. “I figured you wanted to know that right off the bat. You can shut that hell down once and for all.”

Fitz smiled again and nodded, “That’s what I’m planning on doing.” he stated. “Just needed to make sure that everyone was out first.”

Grant’s eyes looked around the room, “Where’s Skye?” he asked. “Is she here?”

May shook her head, “She and Simmons are elsewhere with other SHIELD agents. We’re trying to contact them now to get them to come get us.” she answered, watching as Grant’s shoulders slumped. “They weren’t uploaded here, they came in from the outside. That’s why they’re not here.”

“Oh.” Disappointment laced Grant’s voice. He was really looking forward to immediately seeing Skye, so he really didn’t want to have to wait to do so. “Okay.”

“What happened to your side?” Fitz asked, pointing at the burn. “I thought that you couldn’t get burned.”

“It wasn’t by fire. AIDA gave herself electrokinesis alongside teleportation and super strength. There could’ve been more.” Grant gripped his side, “Guess lightning can burn me. I’ll be okay. It’ll heal. There will probably be a massive scar, though. But that’s fine. I don’t care about that.”

Grant leaned his head back against the wall, “I’m tired. I just wanna get out of here.” he mumbled. “I wanna live somewhere quiet with a dog or two. I’m tired of violence. I’m not that guy anymore.” He took a deep breath and slowly let it out, “I need something different.”

“Yes, I’ll get killed again.”

May narrowed her eyes, “Maybe not that drastic. Coulson got us in trouble with that last time.” she answered. She went to turn around, “This is your second chance, Ward. Don’t waste it. Don’t give Coulson another reason to hate you again.”

Grant blinked and remained quiet as May walked off. He sighed and looked back up at Fitz, “Thanks for helping me get out.” he began. “I couldn’t stay there. You saved me from dying.”

“I was just repaying a debt. You saved me, so I did the same for you.” Fitz stood to his feet and looked towards where the others were, “It’s… It’s not a big deal. Truly. I just hope that I didn’t make a mistake in doing so.”

“Look, I don’t know what you all think I’m going to do.” Grant stated firmly. “I told you, I gave all of that shit up. I’m a different man now, I have no reason to hurt anyone. I… I just want a quiet life with Skye. That’s all I want. Hell, the only thing I’m really wanting now is another dog. So if Coulson has a problem with that, tell him to stick it up his ass.”

Fitz snorted and shook his head, “I think Coulson’s the least of your worries now, Grant.” he said. “You’ve got a whole life in front of you now. If I were you, I’d be worrying about what I’m gonna do with it instead of worrying about what Coulson thinks.”

Grant smiled and leaned his head back again, wrapping the blanket tighter around his body, “Like I
said, I just want a normal life. I just want to be normal, even though I can never be again. I’ve died, become Inhuman, and come back to life. I’m not quite your average guy.”

“That doesn’t mean you can’t have the life you want. You can still live a quiet life somewhere with Skye. Being Inhuman doesn’t mean anything there. It’s just who you are.”

“I hope so. I don’t want to feel like a freak for the rest of my life. It’s time to embrace normality. I think Skye will, too.”

Fitz smiled and turned away again, “Yeah, she probably will.” He trailed off and thought for a minute before turning back to Grant, “And, Grant?”

“Uh, yeah?”

“Welcome back.”

Chapter End Notes

So now there's not much left of this. You'll have Skye reuniting with Grant and then them leaving soon after. Things are really winding down now. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Is This Where Our Story Ends?

Chapter Summary

Things truly start to wind down.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Later)

“So, were you able to get through to them?”

Mack turned around and nodded, a slight smile on his face, “Yeah, we did.” he stated in reply.

“They’re a few hours out and trying to get here as fast as possible. Daisy and Simmons had to catch up with Elena and Piper to clear a few things up, but they’re coming. And we’re waiting to shut down the Framework until they get here. Daisy said herself that she wanted to see it go down. And it’s not like we’re in a rush anymore anyways. We’re out and AIDA’s dead. We can wait a few hours. We need a break anyways.”

Fitz nodded, “That’s good.” He sighed and ran his hands through his hair, “And, yeah, we do need a break. We just need to sit down and rest.” He casted a glance towards Grant in the other room, “The Framework really screwed with us and it’s gonna take a long time for us to get over it. We lost people. Again.” He watched as Mack’s face fell, knowing that the man was thinking about his daughter. He also meant Triplett. “And we got people back who we thought were gone forever. Things have changed. We... We need a chance to let it all sink in.”

“Turbo, you doing okay?” Mack asked softly, stepping forward and placing a gentle hand on the young agent’s shoulder. “I mean, AIDA did a hell of a lot to you.”

“Y-Yeah…” Fitz looked down at his feet. “Like I said, I just need a break to process things. Maybe me and Jemma should take a vacation or something for a while. Just to get away and rest. I’ll be fine.”

“Fitz, if you’re hurting, you need to tell us so we can help you.” Coulson spoke up, taking a step forward. “I don’t want a member of my own team to suffer.”

“And you know that I’m not the only one suffering, right?”

Coulson’s face fell, “Huh? What on Earth are you talking about?”

“Ward.” Fitz jerked his head back over his shoulder to motion towards the other room. “He probably went through more than all of us combined in there. You’re not gonna offer to help him?”

“Fitz, this isn’t about,”

“It is about him!” Fitz almost snapped. “He spent who knows how long in there with two sets of memories in his head. There’s no telling to what that did to him. And that’s only in the Framework. He was hurting before. Maybe if we had helped him from the beginning, we wouldn’t of had gone through everything that we did. You know, we failed him. And then you murdered him in cold
blood.” He sighed and turned away, “You were no better than him.”

A muscle twitched in Coulson’s face and he stepped forward, “Where the hell did this come from?” he asked coldly. “You know what he did, Fitz. He was a monster.”

“And maybe he just needed our help.” Fitz answered, refusing to look at Coulson. “The Ward that is here now has shown that…” He trailed off and shook his head. “Maybe he was never the bad guy. He just needed someone. He was never the monster. Maybe you were all along.” He walked off and left Coulson and Mack to themselves.

“What the hell was that?”

Mack rolled his eyes before turning to Coulson, “I think he’s saying that we should give Ward another chance.” he answered. “Maybe it’s not the best thing to do after everything that he did, but it is the right thing to do. If he didn’t want to change, he would’ve never helped us out of there. Even if he was just doing it for Daisy and Fitz. He never hurt us, Coulson. And I don’t think that he wants to again. He’s got the ability now to kill us in mere seconds, and he hasn’t done that yet. Fitz is right, you should’ve helped him from the start.”

“And why is this against me now?” Coulson asked, crossing his arms. “You weren’t there when he betrayed us, Mackenzie. You don’t know what it was like.”

“No, I don’t. But I know that we should at least give him another chance. Maybe I’m wrong and he’ll end up doing something, but I don’t think that he will. Coulson, I remember you saying once that you loved second chances. Why is this so different?”

Coulson frowned and watched as Mack walked off, leaving him all alone. A part of him wished that May had stayed in the room instead of heading off to find supplies. But another part knew that she would somehow scold him as well. He didn’t understand why everyone had suddenly turned against him in favor of Grant. He still felt as though the man would still try something. Especially since he had been brought back to life by the power of the Darkhold. Truly, he wasn’t sure of what to think anymore.

Who really was Grant Ward nowadays?

(A Few Hours Later)

Grant perked up as he could hear a low roar from somewhere above, even though they were currently underwater. He wasn’t sure if becoming Inhuman had heightened his senses or the Darkhold had done so. Maybe he was truly a demon now. But, truly, he didn’t care as long as it didn’t do anything twisted to him. He didn’t want another reason for the others to hate him.

He rose to his feet, figuring that the roar he had heard was the quinjet that the others were on. And by others, he really only cared about Skye. He didn’t want to be separated from her for another second. So, he was quick to follow the others upwards into some kind of area that connected the submerged base with the top of the platform.

“Come on, Skye.” he thought, bouncing on the balls of his feet. “Hurry up so we can shut this place down and then we can work on leaving. It’s not like we’ve got anywhere else to go anyways. May said the base was destroyed. That gives us all the reason to find us somewhere to ourselves. I
already know that one of my old safehouses will work.”

After what seemed like forever for Grant, the sealed steel doors slowly slid open to reveal Skye, Simmons, and a couple of other agents that he didn’t recognize. He quickly ran over to her, but restrained himself from throwing his arms around her in case Coulson or Simmons retaliated against it for some reason or another.

Skye’s face fell as she registered the fact that Grant was alive and standing right in front of her, “Y- You’re alive.” she stammered, disbelief shining on her face. Coulson had failed to mention to them that he was alive. All the Director had said was that they were out and that AIDA was dead. “You…”

She didn’t finish her sentence and decided to fling her arms around Grant, causing him to hoist her up into the air. “I was so scared that you were gone again.” she mumbled, burying her face into the crook of his neck. “I thought you were dead.”

Grant laughed slightly and shook his head, carefully setting her back down, “No, I’m very much alive. Much to some people’s disappointment.” He shot a glare at Coulson and Simmons, both of which were scowling at the couple (Coulson had really just pieced together that the two were in love again.), “The machine worked. And I don’t think the Darkhold changed me or anything. I seem to be okay.”

He reached out and drew an arm around her waist, “I’m fine.” He looked back at everyone, smiling as he saw Fitz run to Simmons and Mack run to one of the other women that had come with them. He assumed that she was his girlfriend. “I think we’re all fine.”

“Is AIDA dead?” Skye asked, looking up at him. “She’s gone, right?”

He nodded, “Yeah. I killed her myself. So you know that there’s no way that she’s coming back.” he answered coldly. “The only thing left to do is shut down that hell for good. And then… Then we can go.” He looked at Fitz, “Right?”

Fitz smiled, “Yeah. We can.”

Grant drew Skye closer and pressed a kiss to the top of her head, “Come on, let’s get the hell out of here. I don’t want to spend another minute here.

It’s time for this to end.”

Chapter End Notes

So, hopefully, I can finish this by the end of the week. And then I can get back to Fire in the Sky. So I’m hoping it all works out. Keep the comments and kudos coming! (And I may or may not be thinking of a Ghost Rider AU. I’m not sure yet.)
Is the Air I Breathe My Only Legacy?

Chapter Summary

Things come to a close.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Grant breathed in sharply as he watched Fitz type in a few commands into the machine that ran the Framework. The young engineer mumbled under his breath as he worked around various programs and such so that he could find the central command function to delete the Framework construct.

“Can’t you just unplug it?” Coulson asked impatiently, crossing his arms with a slight huff. “Wouldn’t that be easier?”

“Yeah, but this is permanently deleting it instead of shutting it down.” Fitz answered, not taking his gaze away from the computer screen. “I know that most of us will feel better if it’s completely gone. Once I find the delete function, it’ll be gone for good. I’ve already made sure that no one else is trapped in it. They’re either dead or merely constructs of the program.” He sighed and briefly looked back at them, “Most of us made it.”

Grant looked away, trying to avoid the gazes that fell onto him, “Mace should be standing here, not me.” he muttered. “I should’ve found a way to save him instead of going with what he said. There had to be a way.” He trailed off and sighed, only looking up when he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“It’s not your fault, Grant.”

He looked over at Skye, his eyes landing on her hand, “How?”

“You were doing your best.” she answered, giving him a soft smile. “You did what he wanted and you know that you made him happy in the end. Blame AIDA for what happened, and she got what she deserved, right? And besides… We can’t save everyone. We all know that.”

Grant nodded and looked back towards the computer, “I think the only way to make up for what happened now is to shut that hell down.” he stated, his voice growing cold. “It’s what he would want. It’s what all of us want.” He looked around at everyone else before continuing, “That hell made each of us suffer in some way or another, and it’s time for it to end and for us to move on with our lives. It’s the right thing to do now. We can’t go back.”

May nodded and stepped forward, “Ward’s right, it’s time for all of us to move on. We’ve got a lot of crap ahead of us. We don’t have a base to go back to and some of us just want a break. This… This is where things change for us.”

“I,” Skye began, taking a sharp breath. “I think it’s probably good for us to go ahead and say it. Considering we’re all about to leave and everyone wants different things. Grant and I… We’re thinking of leaving for a while and trying to settle down somewhere. Fitz already knows this. We just want some peace and quiet for once and I want to help Grant get acclimated to a normal life.” she
explained. “I know that it’s kind of short notice, but we weren’t sure of how to go about this. And it’s not like we’re completely leaving. We’ll keep in touch. But we can’t keep going the way all of us are. It’s time to settle down.”

“I’ve already figured out where we’re going,” Grant added in, scratching at the back of his head. “I have a safe house in the North Carolina mountains that’s probably the best for us. I’ve got plenty of safe drops with money and such to get us by until we can figure something out about restoring our identities and finding jobs or something. But… But anything’s better than what’s happened at this point.”

May frowned, briefly looking at Coulson. She shook her head slightly as she saw disappointment and anger in his eyes. She looked back at the couple, “Are you sure this is what you want?” she asked. “I know that you’re probably wanting a change, but this is a pretty big change leaving everything behind.”

Skye nodded, “We’ve talked about it these past couple of days and we figured that it is best for the two of us. Neither one of us has ever lived a normal life and that’s what we want. Guess better late than never, right? And like I said, it’s not like we’re completely dropping everything in the dust. We’re not leaving you guys behind. You’re free to stop by at any time. We just need a break.”

Coulson and Simmons remained silent as Mack decided to speak up, “If that’s what the both of you want, I’m not gonna question it.” he stated, trying to make light of it so Coulson or Simmons wouldn’t say anything in retaliation. “It’ll just be hard to see you leave, Daisy. It’ll be weird not having you around all the time. But as long as you’re safe and happy, I’m happy.”

Skye smiled, trying to stifle a laugh as Grant looped an arm around her torso and drew her close. He didn’t press her up against his side since the burn still hurt, something he hadn’t shown or told her about just yet. It was already starting to scar up, so he figured that there was no need to tell her about the injury right now.

“Thanks. At least you guys understand. I was afraid that there would be backlash or something,” she stated, carefully looking at Coulson and Simmons out of the corner of her eye. At least they had remained quiet. “It just time for us to move on.”

“It’s time for all of us to move on.” May said with a nod of her head. She turned back towards Fitz, “Is it ready?” she asked. “Please tell me that it is and that we can get the hell out of here. We probably need to send a team to search this place and destroy it once we’re done with it.” she added, looking towards Coulson. “There’s no telling to what’s here.”

Coulson sighed, “You’re right. I’ll call in a team once we’re all back on the Zephyr.” He looked towards Elena, “Everyone still okay on there?”

“We’re running short on supplies. But there should be enough to last us until we can find another base, sir.” Elena answered. “We weren’t prepared for Daisy and Simmons to be in there for over a week and a half.”

“Well, there’s a base I’m thinking of. It’ll take a few calls and such to make sure it’s up and running, but it shouldn’t take that long.” the older man answered. “Maybe two days, at least. So we’re good.”

Coulson looked back to Fitz, “Fitz, if you’ll do the honors. Ward already dealt with the psycho robot, so you get to shut everything down.”

Fitz scoffed and a slight smile pulled at the edges of his lips, “It’ll be my honor, sir.” he answered. He typed in a few more commands and his finger hovered over the enter button, “Here we go.” he
muttered, pressing the button. The team watched as the screen fizzled out and went blank.

“Is that it?” Simmons asked. “Fitz, is it done? Please tell me that it’s done.”

The engineer nodded and turned around, a huge smile on his face, “Yeah, it’s done. The bloody place is gone forever. As long as no one else happened to have the program on them, but that’s highly unlikely.”

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief as it felt as though a huge weight was lifted from their shoulders. Fitz went over to Simmons and the biochemist embraced him, both resting easy now. Mack went over to Elena as well, so did Coulson with May.

Grant smiled and turned, not paying attention to anyone else as he looked deep into Skye’s eyes, “We finally won, didn’t we?” he asked softly, drawing her close again and burying his face into the top of her head. “I think we can finally rest.”

She smiled and leaned up to kiss the tip of his stubble-covered chin, “Yeah, I think so, too.” she replied. “Let’s get everything settled with the team first and we’ll leave as soon as we land at that new base. We’ve got a lot of preparation to settle down somewhere. We need clothes, supplies, you name it.”

“A dog…”

“Yeah, we’ll get you that dog.”

“No, forget just one dog. I want two. Either two German shepherds or a shepherd and a Labrador.” Grant continued with a slight laugh. “Depending on what we can find.”

“Sure you can handle two puppies at one time?”

“Skye, I’ve died, been possessed by an alien god, and I’ve come back to life. I think I can handle anything.”

“Easy there, don’t get so ahead of yourself, Grant. We still don’t know what kind of shape you’re in. There’s still no telling to what the Framework and the Darkhold did to you. You may be okay now, but that doesn’t mean that you will be later.”

Grant bit his bottom lip and looked to the side, “You’re right. I suffered for so long, there’s no way that I came out of that unscathed. It’s far too early to tell.”

Skye kissed him on the chin again, causing him to blush, “But, no matter what happens, I’ll be there, you know.”

He smiled, “I’m glad things are normal with us again, I… I missed this. It’s what we almost had and I ruined it all.”

“As long as you don’t go back to who you were, we’ll be fine.” she answered, looking up at him. “That man’s long dead. You’re a completely person now, Grant.” She poked him in the chest, “This is the man I love. And I know that you won’t do anything to ruin this. That’s not you anymore.”

“Yeah, that isn’t me. That man died on that alien planet. Now I just want a normal, quiet life. And we can get that now.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll get that. Hopefully, it’ll be peace and quiet from here on out.
It’s time for us to move on.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so maybe two chapters left. The end and a epilogue. So, hopefully, I'll wrap things up very soon. Keep the comments and kudos coming!
The Best is Yet to Come

Chapter Summary

Things come to a final close.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(A Few Days Later)

“You sure that this is want you two want? I mean, this is so suddenly. We just got to this base, you sure that you don’t want to stay for a while?”

Skye shrugged and scooted closer to Grant, “Like I said before, it’s probably best that we leave now instead of waiting. In case anything does happen to pop up with Grant. We want to get everything settled as soon as we can.” she explained. “Grant’s already got the trip to the house all planned out. All that’s left is for us to grab a few supplies here and then go. There’s some safe drop that Grant wants to stop by on the way. Something about grabbing some cash and a few other things of his. Hopefully, we can leave after a while.”

May nodded slowly, her gaze going over towards where Coulson stood in silence, “Again, if it’s what the two of you want, no one’s going to stop you from doing it.” she stated. “As long as Ward decides not to go back to his old ways, which is highly unlikely at this point. The only ones that objected to it are Coulson and Simmons, of course. They think that Ward needs to be monitored at all times. Especially since he’s Inhuman now. Honestly, I think you’re more than enough to keep him in line.”

Grant blushed as Skye playfully elbowed him in the side. Luckily, it was his uninjured side. Even though the burn had healed, it still hurt pretty bad since some areas of nerves had been damaged. He was glad that it had been the only injury he had received.

“Don’t worry, I will. Tell Coulson to get that stick out of his ass.” Skye stated with a snort. “Seriously, he needs to learn that Grant’s not a threat anymore. That ended a long time ago. Hell, that man died. Grant’s not that guy anymore.”

“Skye,” Grant scratched at the back of his head sheepishly. “Honestly, I’m still not that great of a guy. You don’t have to vouch for me like this.”

“Well, someone has to.”

Grant looked away and remained silent.

“And I understand that.” May continued, crossing her arms. “But Coulson won’t be a problem. I’ll make sure of it. And I know that Fitz will as well. I think he and Mack are waiting for you two in the hangar. Something about wanting to be the last person to see you off. I don’t know.”

Skye smiled and walked towards May, throwing her arms around her and hugging her, much to May’s surprise. But May fell in line with it since it was just Skye. “Thanks May, you have no idea how much this means to me.”
May smiled back at her as she pulled away, “Trust me, I think I do. As long as you’re happy, I’m happy as well.”

“I’ll call as soon as we’re settled.” Skye continued, picking up her bag. “It may be a few days, but I won’t forget.”

“I’ll watch out for it.”

Skye blinked and paused, looking over to see that Coulson had disappeared, “What, he’s not going to say anything to us?” she asked. “What a loser.”

May shrugged, “I think he’s still bitter about Ward being alive. It doesn’t help that he hates the fact that you’re going with him.” she answered. “He’ll have to get over it.”

“Well, he better.” Skye mumbled under her breath, turning so she was right next to Grant again. “I don’t want him acting like this forever.”

“If he doesn’t on his own, I’ll make him. It’s best that we all move on, considering that we do have to rebuild all over again.”

Skye nodded, “Yeah, I guess. We all need to move on.”

“Well, go ahead at it. Guess, I’ll see you whenever you see it fit.”

“Thanks. Trust me, it won’t be long.”

Grant gave May a brief nod in place of a goodbye. He still wasn’t quite sure of what to say to the agent just yet. Especially after everything that had happened. He turned and took his bag, taking Skye’s free hand with his own.

The two headed towards the hangar of the new base, to where the car they were going to use was at. Like May had said, they were met by Fitz and Mack just inside.

“Fitz, before you say anything, this isn’t really a goodbye, you know.”

“Yeah,” Fitz shifted uncomfortably. “It’s still gonna be weird not seeing you around all the time. I’m not used to that.”

Skye smiled at him, “Fitz, don’t worry. I mean, you can call us at any time once we’re settled in and everything.” she stated. “It’s not like we’re completely disappearing.”

“Yeah…”

“Look, take that vacation with Simmons. Hell,” Skye turned towards Mack. “You take a vacation with Elena as well. Get some rest for once. God knows that we all need it after everything that’s happened these past few months.”

Mack laughed, “Well, considering we’re having to help set up a new base, I think a vacation isn’t on the agenda for a least a few weeks.”

Skye huffed, “Just… Just don’t work yourselves to death, okay? Learn to take a break once in a while. Please?”

“Don’t worry, Tremors, we will.”

“Wait,” Skye looked around the room before looking back at Fitz, “Where’s Simmons?”
“She’s still upset that you’re leaving with him.” Fitz said, pointing straight at Grant. “Just like Coulson. I don’t think she’s on speaking terms with you just yet.”

“Of course.” Skye muttered under her breath with a roll of her eyes, “I’ll try to talk to her whenever I call. I don’t want this to ruin things between us. She’s just been a huge jerk towards Grant.”

“I’ll try to reason with her or something.” Fitz replied with a shrug, taking a step forward. “Hopefully things will click in her head soon. I don’t know.”

Grant looked at his watch and carefully nudged Skye, “Skye, we need to get going if we’re wanting to get to the house by tomorrow night.” he practically whispered. “I hate to cut things short, but you were the one wanting to get there as soon as we could.”

Skye blinked and nodded, “Oh, yeah.” She looked back at Fitz and Mack, “Guess it’s time for us to go.”

Mack came forward and gave her a hug, “Be careful, Tremors. Make sure that everything goes right with you two.”

“Yeah, don’t want things messing up after everything that’s happened, right?” Fitz joked, quickly hugging Skye and giving Grant a small smile. “Be careful. Especially you, Grant.”

Grant lowered his head, “Yeah, I think the most dangerous thing I’ll do will be exercising my powers. You don’t have to worry about me.” He paused and sighed, “But thanks for helping me out. I know that I didn’t deserve it at all. I,”

“Grant, it’s not a problem. You helped me, so I help you. And the past is in the past right?” Fitz smiled, “You don’t have to thank me. I should be the one thanking you. You broke me out of AIDA’s control.”

Grant took a sharp breath and smiled, “I just didn’t want an old friend getting hurt.”

Fitz’s smile grew, “Well, guess we’ll see you soon. Don’t do anything that will get you two into trouble, right?”

“You don’t have to worry about us. We’ll be fine.”

“Just take care. And don’t forget about us, yeah?”

(A Few More Days Later)

“Skye! Skye! There’s two of them! Two! And they’re brothers! Can we get the both of them?”

Skye raised an eyebrow as she approached the kennel door that Grant was crouched in front of. She peered around him to see two German shepherd puppies jumping excitedly against the door, one completely black and the other black and brown.

“Two of them? You sure? You’re gonna have to be the one to take care of them, you know.” she stated, looking at the two puppies. “Two shepherds will be a handful.”

“It’s not like I have anything else to do anyways.” Grant answered, not taking his eyes off of the
puppies. “And I don’t want to get one and leave the other all alone, considering that they are brothers. They belong together.”

“God, you’re such a sap.” Skye muttered under her breath with a shake of her head. “But what’s the chance that we find two German shepherds? Especially one that looks like Max.”

“It’s fate, I tell you. Someone out there likes me.”

Skye shook her head again and laughed. She went to find a shelter worker to tell them that they had made their decision. The worker quickly followed Skye, delighted that the couple was adopting two of the puppies. He opened the kennel and let Grant go in.

Grant immediately crouched to the ground and scooped the puppies up in his arms, laughing and smiling as he received wet kisses all over his bearded face. His laughs warmed Skye’s heart. She was so glad that he was truly happy again and she hoped that this happiness would stay. He had been so tired and depressed ever since they got to their new home, the effects of what had happened truly starting to take effect. At least Grant was with some of his favorite things.

She watched as he stood up and carefully carried the puppies out to meet her. “I think I call the black one Max, you know why that is.” he began. He frowned as he looked to the black and brown one, who was wriggling all around in his grasp, “I think I’ll call you…. Uh…. Captain! Max and Captain!”

Skye smiled and reached out to pet the two puppies, “That’s perfect, Grant. As long as you’re happy with it.” she stated. “You ready to go? We’ve got to fill out the paperwork and everything in order to take them home.”

“Yeah.”

“Then, come on, let’s go.”

“Don’t worry,” Grant cooed, smiling at the two puppies. “You two will be happy with us. We’ll get you some nice toys and beds.

We’ll all finally be happy for once.”

Chapter End Notes

And now there’s only the epilogue left! And I assure you that it’ll be nothing but pure, sweet fluff. I can promise you that. (And I made Max and Captain siblings here, if you know about them from other fics. I thought it fit.) Keep the comments and kudos coming!
Finale

Chapter Summary

Five years later.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(About Five Years Later)

“Daddy!”

Grant let out a sharp groan as two small figures launched themselves straight into his lap, mere seconds after him sitting down. He let out a small laugh as he reached out and wrapped his arms around the two figures that were now in his lap, “I take it that someone’s really happy to see me!”

“Yeah!”

He looked down at the two kids, “And I wasn’t even gone all that long. What are you two gonna do when I happen to be gone all day?” he asked with a chuckle. “I thought you were supposed to be helping your mom do something? Hmm?”

“We made cookies! Chocolately-chip!”

“Oh, you did, you say?” His eyes swept down to the little boy in his arms, “You didn’t make a mess, Adian?”

The little boy vehemently shook his head, “No! Ava didn’t either!”

“And you didn’t give any to Max or Captain, right? They’re not supposed to have chocolate, remember?”

“I dunno.” Ava stated, squirming to get closer to her father’s chest. Grant smiled and shifted slightly to let the toddler where she wanted to be. “Momma might’ve eated the cookies.”

“Ava, you know you wanted to save some for Daddy.”

Grant shook his head and looked up to see Skye coming into the room, “I’ll get some later. And the dogs didn’t get any, right?” he asked, watching as Skye came over to sit next to them. Ava squirmed out of his arms and crawled over into Skye’s arms. “I just want to make sure.” He looked down to the two shepherds sleeping peacefully at his feet. “You know how the kids are.”

“I made sure that all cookies stayed on the counter.” Skye answered, wrapping her arms gently around Ava. “Captain was intent on getting some, but he failed at that.”

Grant scoffed, “Good thing he wasn’t picked to be a bomb dog or anything.” he stated, repositioning Adian so the toddler wasn’t pressing into his ribs. He returned his attention back to the two toddlers, “Did you have fun at preschool today?” he asked, knowing that the two had been home for a few hours. He hadn’t had the chance to ask them earlier before he had to leave for the shelter. “Were you
“Yeah! We got ‘tickers!’” Ava exclaimed, wriggling in Skye’s arms. “Doggies!”

“Dog stickers?” Skye tried to clarify, tickled at the toddler’s pronunciation. “What kind?”

“Uh… They got floppy ears!” Adian looked towards his father for an answer, but he only shrugged.

“Adian, there’s plenty of dogs that have floppy ears. You’ve gotta be a little more specific than that.”

“Uh, he was yellow.”

Grant blinked, “Was it a golden retriever?” he asked, pulling out his phone. He quickly pulled up the internet and searched for a picture. He held his phone out so Adian could see, “Like this?”

“Yeah, like that!”

“You know, we’ve got a litter of puppies like that at the shelter. If you’re good at school tomorrow, I’ll let you and Ava come with me for a while on Saturday to play with them.” Grant smiled at them, “Okay?”

“Yay, we wanna go!” the twins yelled at the same time.

Skye laughed and stood up, taking Ava up in her arms, “But first, you two need to get ready for bed. You already ate, it’s time for a bath and your jammies. It’s getting late and you’ve got school in the morning.”

“I don’t wanna.” Ava protested as Skye swept some of her brown hair behind her ear. “I wanna watch TV.”

“How about we get you bathed and we’ll spend some time on the couch?” Grant suggested, standing up with Adian. “But not too long.”

“Can we watch puppies?”

“If we can find something about them on TV.” Skye stated, agreeing with Grant’s suggestion. The two began walking towards the bathroom with the twins. “We’ll snuggle and we’ll get that huge, warm blanket. You like that idea?”

“Yeah!” Again, at the very same time.

Both Skye and Grant laughed as they took the two into the bathroom and got them ready for a bath, Max and Captain watching carefully from the doorway. After much splashing and Skye and Grant getting practically drenched, the two toddlers were bathed and dried off. They were then dressed and Skye and Grant took turns taking showers and getting ready.

After about forty minutes, the four found themselves all piled on the couch covered with a massive blanket, Max and Captain at the foot of the couch. Grant’s powers provided extra heat, which the others welcomed since it was starting to get cold outside. He knew that it would only be a matter of minutes before his two children were dead asleep.

“I want puppies.” Adian stated, repeating his statement from earlier. “Can we watch puppies?”

“Yeah, hold on.” Skye reached for the remote and started to change the channels, looking for Animal Planet. She knew that she should’ve given it to Grant, considering that was one of the only channels he watched. She placed the remote aside once she reached the desired channel, “Look, there’s some
puppies.”

Ava clapped her little hands together, “Look, Daddy, puppies!”

Grant smiled, “Yeah.” He took a deep breath, carefully watching the three loves of his life out of the corner of his eye, “Puppies.”

It was moments like this that pulled at his heart. Even though it had been five years since his second chance at life began, he still had a hard time believing that he had it good. His mental state still wasn’t the best and he was prone to bad panic attacks and nightmares. He wanted to blame it on the Darkhold, but he knew that he had already been screwed up before the book ever happened to him.

There was always a nagging voice in the back of his head that tried to tell him that he would lose everything or that it was all just a dream. He couldn’t get rid of it no matter what. And he knew that it would always be there, he just had to learn how to ignore it. The laughter of his children helped him to drown it out.

“Daddy, that looks like Cap’n!” Adian screeched, interrupting Grant’s thoughts.

Grant blinked and grunted as the little boy shifted excitedly by his side, elbowing him in his scarred side. He smiled as he looked towards the TV to see a German shepherd puppy, which, in fact, did look just like Captain did when he was a puppy.

“Huh, how about that? It does.”

“Can we get another puppy, Daddy?” Ava asked from her mother’s side. “I wanna Labrabor.”

“A… Labrabor?” Skye asked, stifling a laugh. “Do you mean a Labrador?”

“Uh, yeah!”

“I don’t think so, sweetie. Max and Captain are enough for now. Maybe when you’re older.” Skye replied with a smile. “We’ve just got far too much on our hands right now for a puppy. Okay?”

A disappointed look formed on Ava’s face, “Otay.” She turned to face the TV again.

The family fell silent for a while, quietly watching the puppies on the TV. Grant eventually looked up to see that the twins were fast asleep and he allowed himself a quiet laugh. He carefully reached out and poked Skye on the shoulder, “Hey, they’re asleep. Wanna put them to bed?”

Skye blinked and looked over to him, “Hmm, just give us a minute. It’s rare to have them like this. It’s quite nice, isn’t it?”

Grant nodded gently, “Yeah, they’re wide-open most of the time. They get that from you, though.”

“You sure? Have you seen yourself work out in the morning?”

He shrugged, “It comes and go.”

Skye huffed and leaned her head back, “It’s surreal, isn’t it?”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Considering that five years ago you were dead and I hated you.” she replied, matter-of-factly. “Now we’re married and have twins. Funny how things work, right?”
“I tend not to dwell on the past anymore. Especially since it makes my issues flare up bad. Hell, it makes my side hurt just thinking about it.” Grant shook his head, “I just want to think about the present and the future now. Right?”

“I suppose that you’re right. At least we’ve got one another now. It’s just so hard to comprehend that we’ve got everything we’ve ever wanted now.”

“Yeah, it’s hard for me to believe, too. But I’m getting there.” Grant answered, running a hand over Adian’s short, black hair. “They help me, though. It’s getting better.”

“You’ll get there eventually, sweetheart. It’s just gonna take time. You have a lot to heal from. Five years isn’t going to cut it.”

“Yeah, I know. At least I’m getting there.” Grant carefully leaned over and kissed Skye on the cheek, careful not to disturb the twins. “Slowly, but surely. But I’m glad for what we have now. I wouldn’t trade it for the world.

Nothing can ever replace this. We’re finally happy for once. We have everything we’ve ever wanted right in the palms of our hands.

We’re right where we want to be.”

Chapter End Notes

And that's a wrap on this story! I really hope that you enjoyed it! Until next time!

End Notes

And yet another idea to destroy your souls! Find me on Tumblr @gears-of-ward!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!