the future's so bright (I gotta wear shades)

by KiaraSayre

Summary

Things Bucky loves about the future.

Notes

This is a birthday present for Chaya, who wanted Bucky discovering all of his favorite things about the future. I think I got all the specifics you mentioned, plus a few that I added in just for kicks. Happy birthday a couple hours early! :D

Many thanks to Desdemon for the beta!

Contains strong language, depictions of therapy that are completely divorced from reality, and fluff levels that may induce cavities. The Abbott and Costello sketch mentioned towards the end is the classic Who's on First sketch, which is worth watching in its entirety because it's hilarious.

The Sharper Image

It's like the Stark Expo, but in a mall. Bucky could spend - and has spent - hours just looking at the gadgets and doo-dads and thingamabobs, disappearing when Steve's trying to get him to buy clothes or luggage or a new computer or whatever other normal things Bucky's supposed to get.

Steve always finds him lying in one of the massage chairs, halfway to a power nap.
On one such occasion, Bucky hears Steve's resigned sigh, followed by a tired, "Really, Buck?"

Bucky doesn't even bother opening his eyes, just reaches one hand out to pat the armrest of the display massage chair next to him. "C'mon, Steve, live a little."

Steve inevitably gives in, and they sit there for a while, letting the chairs do their thing. Eventually, though, Steve drifts off into what isn't quite a doze but is unguarded enough that he doesn't freak out when he hears Bucky get up from his chair, only opens his eyes in time to see Bucky come back with something that looks like an oversized spindly metal spider with its legs swooping to form an elongated almost-a-sphere.

"Bucky, what in God's name is that?" Steve asks, relaxed enough that he doesn't get out of the chair.

"It's a scalp massager," says Bucky, and shoves it over Steve's head - well, not so much over as on to, so that the ends of the spindly parts scritch gently against Steve's scalp in a way that makes him go boneless and inarticulate almost immediately.

"See?" Bucky says. "Told you this place was amazing."

"Mmmmmph," says Steve.

**exciting new ways to express oneself**

Bucky has always considered himself something of a connoisseur of filthy language. It came from working on the docks and in the trenches and the seemingly endless supply of foreign-language cusses that Gabe and Frenchie knew between them.

Turns out the 21st century has even more.

"It stands for 'Adios, Mother Fucker, You're On Your Own,'" Sam says with a grin, and Bucky wants to give it a standing ovation. "AMF-YOYO."


"Does Steve swear?" Sam wonders. "I don't think I've ever heard him - "

"Oh, he does," Bucky says. "You just have to earn it."

"Gross," Clint says.

"No, like - it's gotta be really bad. He's gotta be really angry," Bucky says. "It's from when he was a USO showgirl - he was kissing babies and posing with dames, and as much as he hated it, I think he just got in the habit. Although," he looks around the living room on the Tower, making sure Steve's not in sight, "if you want to know how to get him to really let loose, you just gotta beat him at something. Card games work real nice. He's a competitive son of a bitch."

Which leads directly to:

**video games**

Bucky beats Steve and the rest of the team on Rainbow Road four times in a row, and Steve cusses so long and so loud and so detailed that JARVIS steps in and offers to rig the game for him to make sure he'll win next time.

Steve blinks, suddenly brought out of it, and says, "Well, thank you, JARVIS, but no. I want to
win honestly."

This means that Steve will never win, and the next round they play, Bucky sees Stark taking notes every time Steve explodes.

Bucky wins again anyway.

**microfiber blankets**

Bucky sleeps everywhere. Being a professional kind-of superhero, kind-of assassin, kind-of bodyguard for Steve (who apparently in seventy years never learned how to avoid getting hit in the face, whether by aliens or Nazis or whoever intends on dominating the Earth today) leaves him a surprising amount of free time, whether he's in the apartment he shares with Steve in Brooklyn or in the Tower to let Stark take yet another look at his arm.

And the blankets these days - he would've killed for one of these blankets during the War. No, really, he might legitimately have killed a man, but only if they were HYDRA. (Or just Nazis.)

They're so soft and cozy, like you remember your first blanket from when you were a child and all you remember is safe and warm and not "scratchy" or "holes everywhere." They come big, too, big enough to wrap around himself multiple times if he wants to, and sometimes he does.

(Once, he does so apparently a little too well before falling asleep on Stark's couch, and Barton sits on his head and claims he mistook the 'Bucky burrito' for a long and pretentiously weird cushion.)

Really, the only problem is that some of the blankets rub against each other while he sleeps, and he's woken up more than once accidentally discharging static into his left arm.

**modern dancing**

Steve expresses active disinterest in modern dancing, but he was never much of a dancer anyway. He always thought it was about the dame, not the dance itself, but for Bucky it was never about the dame - it was about the physicality, the partnership, anticipating the exact motion that will tell your partner to expect a spin and not a dip.

Well, okay, it was a *little* about the dames, too.

And now there are all these movies on the internet that show all the different ways there are of dancing now, whole new styles for entire types of music that didn't exist in the forties, and it's not just steps and turns anymore. Hips, asses, torsos, breasts - there are entire styles of dancing for parts of a woman's anatomy that weren't supposed to move at all in Bucky's day, rubbing up against other parts of their partners' anatomy that weren't supposed to touch at all in Bucky's day.

And some of it, to be honest, is just about control of his body. Just because he used to be a weapon, used to only move as instructed, for efficiency and for a purpose, doesn't mean that he has to keep doing it. Sometimes it's worth it just to imagine the look on Pierce's face if he knew what his asset was doing to the body that was so carefully maintained.

Natasha finds him in the Tower one day with his laptop out and a YouTube video up entitled "How to Moonwalk."

Three hours later, Steve comes home to find them both in the gym, Natasha teaching Bucky how to lift her so she can get a decent ballet practice partner for once. Bucky literally moonwalks backwards into the shadows to escape the conversation, and Steve laughs so hard that the ballet is all but forgotten.
There's something about a Coney Island hot dog that just stays with you, even if Steve would insist that what stays with you is the indigestion. That said, there's food from everywhere available in New York now: Thai food and Sudanese food and Cuban food and Vietnamese food and sushi and curry and Italian restaurants that specify which part of Italy they cook from and it's just - it's a lot, and Bucky loves it.

He starts building up a collection of cookbooks, starting with a simple American cookbook that breaks the recipes out by region. Chicago deep-dish style pizza turns out to be an affront against man and nature, but the recipes from the South work out pretty well, and Bucky becomes a master of whipping up hush puppies.

After that he extends beyond the U.S. and - well, he has some time on his hands since the Avengers have been very, very nice to him but haven't suggested he actually start crimefighting yet (he's pretty sure they're asking his therapist for advice, who is probably right about these things), so he basically goes to the grocery store or the nearest farmer's market, finds something he's never heard of, and then Googles it back at the Tower to figure out what he can do with it.

Steve's eyes bug out with happiness after Bucky makes a starfruit upside-down cake, so Bucky will call it a win.

Bucky didn't like therapy at first.

Scratch that: Bucky literally contemplated murdering his therapist at first.

It had little or nothing to do with the therapist herself. Her name is Sarah, she's old enough to at least have heard about Bucky's generation from a few generations before her, and she is the nicest stubborn son of a bitch that Bucky has ever met.

She's good, too good, at making Bucky feel things and refusing to shy away from the impact, and in their third session she asks a question that makes Bucky pull a knife on her. She looks him in the eye and says to him, "Right now we're just talking, James. These are just words, and they can't hurt you. This," and she pulls a Taser out of her desk drawer. "is a Taser, and I understand that it hurts a lot. I would prefer that we kept talking, because while I'm fairly certain you could kill me with the knife, I will at least try to defend myself and that will just cause a whole lot of unnecessary fuss."

Bucky puts his knife away, Sarah puts her Taser away, and Bucky feels a lot better for knowing that it's there.

In their fifth session, after four and a half hours over three weeks of debating whether Bucky can truly be held responsible for the actions of the Winter Soldier and whether his consistently gruesome fantasies about murdering Arnim Zola and anyone else affiliated with SHIELD are worrisome, she bursts his bubble of guilt by saying, "Well, James, correct me if I'm wrong, but you're saying that when Zola made you do things it didn't matter that you didn't want to do them because it was the action that mattered; but you're also saying that the fact that you haven't murdered anyone still with HYDRA doesn't matter because you do want to. It seems you're having your cake and eating it - either only actions matter or only thoughts matter, but whichever way it is, it seems that you're at least doubling your portion of guilt."

That was their fifth session. The woman is a powerhouse of taking no shit, not from Bucky, not
from HYDRA, not from anyone, and by the time Sarah suggests that they go down to once a week, Bucky has cried in her office on seven different occasions, beaten her at poker twice (and been beaten at poker about twelve times), had twenty-three panic attacks, and bought her a bouquet of flowers the size of her head after a breakthrough that had him crying into Steve's shoulder while Steve cried into his.

It was very cathartic, and if the hugging turned into other, more comforting activities, well - Bucky doesn't need therapy for any of that.

**the internet**

"Bucky, are you still awake?" Steve says at four in the morning, coming through the living room of the Tower in his jogging gear.

"I'm an experimental supersoldier assassin. I don't need sleep," Bucky says, typing feverishly into his laptop.

Steve sighs. "Are you arguing with people on the internet again?"

Bucky looks up at Steve, his mouth tightened into a highly judgmental line. "Do you have any idea how stupid they are?" he says.

Steve shakes his head. "Baseball or politics?"

Bucky licks his lips and says, "...Eurovision?"

There are some things from Bucky's time as the Winter Soldier that will stay with him forever. His obsession with Eurovision is one of the less dangerous, yet more inexplicable, ones.

"Well," Steve says, "you tell 'em, Buck."

"I got 'em on the ropes."

**cell phones**

Steve are you there

did you know this capitalized your name for you*

Steve where is the question mark*

I think my fingers are too big for this phone

it updated and moved all the symbols, how do I make it unupdate*

Steve why aren't you texting me back*

Steve are you alive

Steve I will come after you and avenge you if you're dead

Bucky, I know you know how to use the phone. I'm not dead, and try to check your text messages before sending them instead of pretending you can't find the backspace.

if the future wanted me to use the right symbols they wouldn't have moved them
life: s too short to spellcheck texts

See? I said spellcheck.

I'm awesome at the future.

tv binges

Clint tells Bucky that the best way to catch up on American politics is to watch all of The West Wing, so Bucky does.

In about three days.

It turns out to be a mistake. While it does give him a good sense of how modern politics work (that is, a bunch of neurotic crazy people making somewhat arbitrary decisions while talking faster than Bucky would've thought physically possible) and it's certainly enjoyable and addictive, everything's pretty out-of-date and also Natasha isn't as flabbergasted by the whole map thing as Bucky would've hoped.

The dialogue does remind him of the screwball comedies he and Steve used to go see, though, and Bucky finds a bunch of them online and watches them again with Steve for old times' sake.

modern clothing

The Tower has more space for clothes than Bucky can even begin to know what to do with. For all that he'd been a snappy dresser in Brooklyn, he'd also been dirt-poor, and he'd spent months - plural - in the same ratty sweater and trousers during the War, and after that he hadn't so much worn clothes as been outfitted with tactical skin-covering equipment.

There are just so many choices these days, with soft clothes and clothes that are barely there and clothes that are so tight he can barely move his legs. And he can afford all of it because he actually has money, which still feels like an unspeakable luxury, even though everything is ridiculously expensive these days.

But skinny jeans are surprisingly comfortable, at least once he gets used to the sensation, and Steve seems to have a particular - ahem - appreciation for when Bucky wears them. And t-shirts these days all say things on them, funny things or logos or weird drawings, and Bucky finds that when he's having the kind of day when he can't shake off the weight of the past seventy years and snaps at everything and everyone, he can literally wear a t-shirt that says "FUCK EVERYTHING" across his chest and it gets his point across quite eloquently.

And on other days, when he's feeling better and wants to make an entirely different kind of point, he put on a t-shirt with Captain America's shield on it. That one tends not to stay on as long, but it does look quite fetching on the carpet of Steve's bedroom.

fucking with Tony Stark

It definitely gets its own category.

Basically, from the moment that three-year-old toddles up to Bucky while he's helping clean up the Avengers' mess after the fiasco with the mole people coming out of the ground in Central Park (because he's ready to put the arm to use but not quite ready to put himself behind the barrel of a gun yet) and looks at his metal arm (souped up by Stark himself with red and gold racing stripes while Bucky had been distracted and armed with repulsors to break up debris for the day) and says "Are you Iron Man?" while the actual Iron Man is literally three feet behind the little tyke
(albeit not in the suit), it's way too much fun to give up.

Stark turns around to give Bucky an incredulous look, and so Bucky looks the kid straight in the eyes and says, "Yes. Yes, I am."

"I thought Iron Man was..." the kid says, struggling for words. Behind him, Stark's eyes are huge, practically dinnerplates of what the hell do you think you're doing and it doesn't get any better when the kid finishes, "Shorter."

Bucky looks up, just for a second, to see Stark's mouth fall open in indignation, and then tells the kid, "Do you want to hear a secret? One from Iron Man, who's me? I put platforms in the boots of my suit to make me taller."

"You're a dead man, Barnes," Stark tells him later. "You're so lucky that I didn't want to crush the ridiculous hopes and dreams of that tiny brat - "

"But it made his day, to have talked to Iron Man, especially what with you not being in the suit these days," Bucky says, as innocent as he can, before looking pointedly at Iron Man's boots. "Besides, I didn't say anything that wasn't true."

"Yeah, well, I'm pretty sure my dick is still bigger than yours, so," Stark says, and from then on it's basically war.

He finds out every last thing that makes Stark twitch and exploits it. Stark particularly hates it whenever Bucky or Steve do anything that Stark considers to be insufficiently old-fashioned - at least, as long as Stark wasn't the one to introduce them to it - so Bucky gets an iPod, loads it up with all the top 40 hits he can find, and memorizes every last word. He gets a Bluetooth earpiece and keeps his headphones looped over his neck like all the kids are doing nowadays, wears big ugly sneakers and skinny jeans and introduces Steve to the fist-bump.

There's one incident in particular, when the Avengers are all together for a briefing and Bucky's basically just hanging around for the free coffee as Thor tries to detail the intricate series of alliances, betrayals, affairs, one-sided romantic yearnings, deaths, resurrections, engagements, and broken engagements that have ultimately led to some Asgardian named Karnilla coming to Earth to... well, Bucky's not entirely clear on that, but apparently it's nefarious and important that each of the Avengers knows every last detail about Karnilla's life, which Thor is attempting to map out on a whiteboard.

It's messier than most of the Nazi battleplans that Bucky ever dealt with, even after Sam convinced Thor to use different colored markers for different relationships.

Thor is explaining for the fifth time that although Karnilla is an enchantress she's not the Enchantress, because that distinction is apparently vital despite the fact that they know fuck-all about either of their plans, when Bucky brings Steve a new cup of coffee. Steve takes it gratefully, and Bucky half expects him to chug it.

"Okay, so if Karnilla's not the Enchantress, what does the Enchantress want with the Norn Stones?" Stark demands, and Thor throws his arms out to the side in an equally frustrated shrug.

"As I have said, I know not!"

The opportunity is too perfect - Steve's just raising his coffee cup to his lips when Bucky leans down and murmurs to him, "Thought he was on third base."

Steve chokes on his coffee. His coughing attracts everyone else's attention, but once he's got his breath back he looks up at Bucky and says, "Naturally."
"No, Who's on first," Bucky says, and offers Steve a fist bump, which Steve reciprocates.

"Oh, don't - don't do that with old stuff, that's just not okay," Stark says.

"What about you and Churchill's 'V for Victory' sign you throw up every time someone's got a camera, huh, Stark?" Bucky says. "Thought you were a man of the future."

"Victory is timeless - Abbott and Costello is ancient."

"Perhaps this is a conversation best left for once Midgard is no longer in peril," Thor says, but Bucky can tell he's just sore because he doesn't get the joke.

He doesn't jump in on this particular fight with Karnilla (and, it turns out, the Enchantress, the Executioner, and a brief appearance from a magical specter of Loki), but he finds a high point and keeps everyone in the loop over the comms. He knows better than to endanger an op, but he also knows Steve well enough to know what when he says, "I Don't Give A Darn's got a Norn Stone in left field," Steve'll understand it.

Tony swears a blue streak, and Steve's breathless chuckle over the comms is just icing on the cake.

actually fucking Steve

Bucky doesn't have to be inconspicuous about buying lube or condoms; he doesn't have to worry about accidentally brushing his hand against Steve's and giving them away; he doesn't have to bite his lip to keep quiet at night because Stark has soundproofed the entire Tower; he doesn't have to hide the hickey or marks that Steve leaves on him when Bucky asks him to; and even if he were still in the Army, they wouldn't be able to kick him out.

And maybe one day, when he's sure his head's screwed on right and when Steve's laid off a bit with the overprotectiveness, Bucky can buy two men's wedding bands and it'll be legal in New York.

Works inspired by this one

[podfic] the future's so bright (I gotta wear shades) by KiaraSayre, reena_jenkins

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