

## Vulnerable

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I was still clinging to Loki, sobs coursing through my body as he held me. "I need it to stop Loki, all I can see is his face. Please!" I was begging him, what I expected him to do I wasn't sure, but the pain was horrendous.

"James' here darling, stop fighting him and let him help."

I opened my eyes, looking over his shoulder to see Bucky walking towards us. The fact that the cell door was open didn't even phase me, all I could concentrate on was him.

"Let me help doll, please."

He came and knelt down next to me as I let go of Loki. Bucky's hands moving the hair that was stuck to the tears on my face. It was then that I really understood he was truly there. "Bucky?"

He gave me a small smile as Loki walked away, giving us as much privacy as he could. "That's the first time you've not called me James." He wasn't counting the night we slept together, that was only because he'd begged me. "Let me help you, please."

"All I can feel is his hands all over me. His face telling me what to do. I can't do this, I'd rather die." I finally allowed him to see what I'd been hiding all these years. I let him see how broken I am. How much effort just breathing took.

His hands rested on the side of my face, not letting me look anywhere other than in his eyes. "He can't hurt you anymore. No one will ever hurt you again."

"You hurt me." The tears started again as I felt the heartbreak as if it was only yesterday. "You let me. I loved you and you broke my heart." We both knew as much as I pretended my love was gone, it was more present than ever. Hidden under all the hurt and the anger was my undying love for him. "The worse part is I want to hate you but I can't."

He didn't say anything, he knew there was no words that could make me feel better. Instead he pulled me into his arms. I was unsure how long we stayed that way, but my breathing evened out and I finally felt safe. His scent filling my nostrils and calming my heart.

By the time we pulled apart there were tears in his eyes. His hands rested on the sides of my face. Without thinking I wrapped my hands around his neck and smashed my lips against his. He returned the kiss instantly, his tongue forcing its way into my mouth, not that I resisted in the slightest. Our teeth clashed together as we let our actions do the talking for us.

As he pulled away he rested his forehead against mine. "Mine." One word was all he needed to melt away the pain.

When he stood I felt the panic creeping back in, until he pulled me to my feet. My legs shaky as I struggled to stand. He hooked his arm under my knees, picking me up. I clung onto his chest as he carried me out of the cell and through the compound. Normally I would've been searching for a way out, but all I could think of right now was Bucky. How he'd come to stop my suffering, to help me.

He took me into what I assumed was his room, laying me on the bed. He tried to step away but I grabbed his wrist. "Don't leave me." My voice breaking as he finally let myself admit how much I needed him.

"Doll I'm just going to get you some clean clothes okay? I won't leave the room."

I nodded and reluctantly let him go. True to his word he walked over to his chest of drawers on the far side of the room, pulling out a t-shirt and a pair of boxers. He sat beside me on the bed, his hand holding mine. "Is it okay if I take your clothes off?" He knew I needed him to ask, he always asked for my consent in whatever we did, and it only made me fall harder for him. I nodded in response and he carefully began undressing me.

Once he'd got me changed, he pulled the covers over me, his scent enveloping me, instantly calming me.

"Do you need anything doll?" He asked as he knelt next to the bed.

"I just need you."

He looked at me confused.

"I need you to hold me. I need you to make me feel safe."

Vulnerability flooded from me and he didn't judge me in the slightest for it. He simply nodded his head, kicking off his shoes he climbed into the bed fully clothed. His way of reassuring me that nothing was going to happen. He laid down next to me, not touching me, waiting for me to go to him. It didn't take long before I did. I curled up against him, my head resting on his chest as my legs tangled up with his.

"Bucky?"

"Yes doll?" He ran his fingers through my hair.

"Can you...um..." I tugged on his t-shirt, not sure how to word that I needed the skin to skin contact. He understood what I meant as he quickly pulled it up over his head. I snuggled back into him, ignoring the flutter in my chest as I did.

He stroked his metal hand across my back as I drifted to sleep.

Feeling safer than I had in years.

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Nat took the opportunity to go and talk to Loki. Winter was with Bucky so she hoped she'd be able to get him to talk as she had before. Stepping out of the shadows his eyes found her.

"How is she?" It was the only thing he cared about. Seeing the strong and confident woman turned into a sobbing mess, had him feeling things he thought he'd never feel again. Compassion and empathy for someone else. He wasn't sure if his feelings were completely platonic or not.

Nat stepped closer towards him. "Since when do you care about anyone but yourself?"

"She's different. Now how is she?" Loki snapped, not in the mood for her games.

"Bucky took her to his room. She's confined to the compound." She crossed her arms, giving him a stern glare.

Loki wasn't born yesterday, there was only one reason they'd let her out in the first place. It had nothing to do with her breakdown and he knew it. "You have nothing to hold her on." He smiled as he saw Nat gulp. Standing he stalked towards her, hating the fact he was confined once again. "So you've come to me hoping I'll give you something you can imprison her for." He knew how these mortals worked now. They couldn't keep someone prisoner without a real reason. They simply didn't have one for Winter, she was too clever for that. "You know, loyalty is a funny thing." He smirked, showing how little he was willing to give her.

"The only thing you're loyal to is power." Nat spat back at him, her hatred for him shining through.

"Tell me Romano, you make me the villain in your stories." He was right in front of her, the thick glass being the only thing between them. He slammed his fist on the glass making her jump slightly.

"Where were you precious heroes when she was being tortured in the worst way possible?" He snarled at her. He was a villain and had made peace with that, but what Winter had been through? That was a

step too far, even for him. These heroes claim to protect all of Earth and yet they had failed Winter in the worst way, and they wondered why her heart was so full of rage and hate.

He knew in that moment, it mattered not what happened to him. As long as Winter was okay.

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I felt Bucky slip out of the bed as his phone started ringing. He picked up the phone and sighed at whoever was on the other end.

"No. Not happening." He snapped. "Fine I'll be there soon. No, she's sleeping I'm not waking her." A pause as whoever it was on the other end clearly had something to say about me. "Because I said so! Yeah I know Nat." He hung up the phone with a sigh.

"I take it they're not happy." I mumbled from my spot in the bed, opening my eyes. He ran his fingers through his hair before sitting beside me. His hand intertwining with mine. "Get some rest doll. I'll sort it okay?" He pressed a kiss to my head before leaving me.

Under no circumstances was I about to lay in bed while my fate was decided for me.

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