Chapter 62

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Natasha leads me towards Barnes' cell in silence. The only sounds we
make are the clicking of her heels against the floor and the more
mu led sound my boots make. I can sense she wants to say
something and that she is fighting against that impulse. I'm too tired
to confront her. And quite frankly, whatever it is that has got her so
intrigued is probably not something I want to talk about. I keep
seeing the last image of Wanda I have like it has been frozen on my
retinas and won't fade. Her green eyes as piercing as they are so as
we made eye contact keep following me wherever I look. And I
walked right past her, not strong enough to either comfort her or
confront her.
I know she heard some of what I was thinking. I could tell as soon as I
looked into her eyes. She might have the power to look into peoples'
minds but she doesn't have the power to conceal her emotions; one
look at her and I know, one dive into her eyes and they reveal
everything. Only I fear I've dived too deep.
And so I've followed Natasha away tamely, like an old, loyal dog. I
don't even know why Barnes wants to talk to me now, and what
about. I assume he's going to try to get me to switch again and to
become whomever or whatever Hydra made me. And that is probably
why Wanda should be there next to me, ready to pull me out. But I
don't want that. The thought of having to be saved from myself over
and over again by her is one that makes me get this pressure in my
chest which seems to squeeze everything positive away. She
shouldn't have to do that. It's not fair and I won't use her like that.
Especially not for that. No, this is something I have to deal with
myself.
"Alright, enough of the hu ing and pu ing behind me. Talk." Natasha
stops so abruptly I almost walk straight into her.
I stagger slightly, taken aback, having to step back a step or two in
order to give myself a little bit of distance from her all-knowing gaze.
"I'm not hu ing and pu ing." I deflect, buying myself time and she
knows it, giving me a bored look.
"That was not the important bit I wanted you to focus on. Talk." She
adds, enunciating carefully.
"What do you want to know?" I sigh, knowing I'll get o more easily
just giving in.
"Must be heavy if you're not even going to fight me, Olivia. That's a
first." Natasha surprises me, giving me what I might mistake for a
genuine smile.
"Don't let that get to your head." I warn her and she smirks.
"There she is. Now," She pauses, keeping her eyes on me while
leaning back slightly against the corner of the wall she's stopped by.
"How do you feel?"
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"How do you feel?"

"Worried I'll snap and try to o you?" I smile hollowly.

"Yeah, you'd try." She upholds her signature smirk which makes me roll my eyes. "Why didn't you want Wanda to come?"

I sigh, looking away from the spy at something, anything else.

Although I knew she'd most likely not shy away from asking exactly what she would find the most pressing question it still doesn't help prepare me for the flood of mixed feelings that accosts me.

"I... I don't know what to expect with Barnes..." I begin honestly. "I feel like... like she's been put through enough and some of that has been my doing and if I can... well, if I can minimize some of that I will."

I look at her and she quirks an eyebrow, challenging me to disagree with her statement, which I know she knows is untrue.

"You know me." I settle with, hoping she won't push further. Of course, she disobeys my wish.

"I don't, really. I know I've been quite cold to you since you got here."

I watch her, intrigued with this new side of herself she's showing. The Black Widow, caring? "But that doesn't mean I still don't care about you, Olivia. I just am protecting my family."

She takes a breath, looking away from me, thinking.

"I feel like... like we're alike, you and me."

"I'll choose to view that as a compliment."

"It is. And it also isn't."

"What do you mean?" I ask and she laughs slightly, a raspy, slightly

"It means that I don't trust people easily, and neither do you. It

means I've isolated myself, and so are you. It means if you're not

hard to tell with her. Natasha waits for my answer patiently and

I don't reply straight away. Is she warning me or threatening me? It's

cold laugh. A damaged laugh.

shit than you ever could."

common.

the 'don't hurt her' talk.

God, I am not great at this.

"I don't-"

exhaling. "I just... I'm so overwhelmed."

careful, you won't have anyone to lean on."

"Hmm." Natasha purrs in a low voice. "So, purely selfless, then?"

calmly, her body relaxed as though we were having a surface-level chat about something as inconsequential as the weather or what we had for dinner last night.

"What are you saying?" I finally ask.

"I'm saying that you might benefit from talking to someone. That doesn't have to be Wanda, or me. But I think it would help. And I think Wanda also deserves to know what you're feeling right now."

I open my mouth to speak, but Natasha cuts me o, seeing my expression.

"Yes, you're allowed your privacy, but this isn't something that is

a ecting only you. You know she feels incredibly guilty, right? She

would probably kill me if she knew I was talking to you about this, but

oh well, she can try." Natasha shrugs easily. "She feels this is all her

fault, and that you are blaming her too, but won't admit it. And trust

me, even if you are, that girl is giving herself a hundred times more

"She has nothing to feel guilty about." I tell Natasha, and I do mean my words. I don't blame her for anything.

"Are you joking? When you were -gone, she told me about how you two got here. It sounds like she's dragged you into quite the mess."

"She didn't drag me, I stepped in happily and made more of a mess." I laugh hollowly.

"Well, that may be but that's not how she sees it. She needs to point

the finger and she's pointing it at herself." Natasha smiles sadly. "You

know, I know I technically haven't met her yet, but I feel this urge to

"You've got a sister?" I ask her, surprised. Another thing we have in

protect her. I guess it's the big sister in me."

"I do, a little sister. Yelena." Natasha says, pride in her voice and she stands up slightly straighter.

"Hmm. If she's anything like you, I hope I never meet her." I say, a smile spreading on my face.

"Hey! You'd be so lucky!" Natasha laughs.

"I bet she's great." I say and she smiles and nods.

"She is. And so is Wanda. So, you know." Natasha says, and I have a

weird feeling we're having the 'don't hurt her' talk without having it

"I know." I give her a genuine smile, because despite not knowing a

lot of things to be true that I can easily say and believe.

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Natasha nods, pleased. "Good. I know you two have a very complicated history, I just want her, and you, to be okay. It hurts me to see her blame herself like this. And the way you just treated her back there probably didn't help."

My heart sinks slightly as I realize she's probably right. Wanda was

reaching out, just like I wanted her to do instead of dealing with

things alone, and what did I do? Gave her the cold shoulder and went

to deal with things on my own, leaving her to have to fend for herself.

"I know. I was stupid. And I don't blame her." I look up at the ceiling,

I look down as I feel Natasha place a hand on my upper arm. She

gives me a so smile and squeezes my arm.

"Who wouldn't be? You just need to talk."

"All I feel like I'm doing is talking to her about some problem which we then resolve only for there to be another one waiting behind the previous one."

"Welcome to loving someone, kid." Natasha pats my arm.

You look absolutely idiotic. And in love." Natasha lets go of me and looks to a door a few steps away.

"You ready for Barnes?" She asks, changing the subject completely.

Right, okay, that's that, then.

"Lead the way, Dr. Phil." I tell her and she frowns at me, but goes to open the door.

"Don't pretend. You should see your face every time you look at her.

slumped on a chair in front of a huge glass wall. He looks up when he hears us enter, his blue eyes quickly going from scanning me to meeting Natasha's eyes, which makes a small smile appear on his face.

They stay quiet, apparently not needing words to tell the other how they're feeling. I watch them for a minute, missing having a relationship that uncomplicated and reciprocal with someone. I let

the door close behind me and I tear my eyes from Natasha and Steve,

looking to the cell in the middle of the room instead. Another pair of

piercing blue eyes meet me, almost hidden behind a curtain of black

"He asked for you." Steve says and I break eye contact with Barnes. "If

Steve's eyebrows rise slightly, but then he makes a motion with his

shoulders which almost looks like he's saying 'fine, lie and I won't

question you'. I don't react but walk towards the glass wall separating

His eyes don't leave mine. I get taken back to the moment I met him

first in the park, back when half of his face was covered by the mask

and his metal arm hidden. Now nothing is hidden. His face is mine to

look at and his silver arm is twisted up and held still by one of Stark's

machines. Just as he cannot hide, neither can I. The glass separating

"I'm fine." I cut him o , feeling Natasha's careful eyes on me.

hair, these eyes are riddled with questions and lies.

you're not-"

Barnes and me.

As I enter the room in which Barnes is held Natasha shoots me a

quick look before walking up to a very tired-looking Steve who is

us does nothing to actually separate us. His cold eyes stare at me like a wolf staring down a strange wolf that has dared walking into its' territory, watching, waiting for it to attack or flee. I know enough from my training with the FBI to not be the one to break eye contact, so I calmly return the favor, keeping my eyes on his although it sends shivers down my spine.

It seems like Barnes is looking for something in my eyes, and I can tell the moment he finds it. His mouth opens ever so slightly to let out a small breath and he leans back just an inch or so, making the plates in his arm shi to accommodate the movement. He looks almost

"Witch got in your head, didn't she." He finally speaks, not posing a

audible. It's as if he doesn't want Natasha and Steve to be part of the

"What makes you say that?" I too keep my voice low, trying to remain

"And who am I seeing?" I study him, wondering what he is playing at,

but at the same time feeling oddly linked to this virtually strange

una ected by the easy way he keeps his cool eyes on me.

"I see you again." Barnes sighs and his metal arm shi s slightly,

conversation, keeping an odd sense of intimacy between him and

question but phrasing it as a statement, his voice flat and barely

disappointed with a weird flash of relief.

me.

man.

uncomfortably.

their behest, then?"

is that they put in me?

There won't be a third.

As much as I hate him for what he did to me, having gone through the same thing myself that has tortured him for all these decades, I would be foolish to be angry. All I feel when I look at his broken frame is pity and sadness. He looks just as broken as I feel, and I know he doesn't have an answer to my question.

"What did they put in me?" I ask him instead, thinking of the virus-like thing Stark and Bruce found.

"They found their way of controlling me was a little..." Barnes pauses in discomfort. "Temperamental."

I can see Steve move slightly from the corner of my eye, but neither Barnes nor I look away from each other.

"Right. Great." I chuckle. "So what? They'll just turn me on and o at

Barnes shrugs and my stomach sinks. He doesn't know. If he doesn't

know, then how will I ever even have a chance at fighting whatever it

intently, and I'm trying my best to not let my discomfort show, but it's

Hydra having not only managed to abuse me physically and mentally

Barnes blinks emptily. His arm shi s. I keep staring at him and for the

almost too much for me to be able to control. I feel used and dirty;

while I was there, but it's the fact that they have found a way to do

that without even touching me that's getting to me.

"And what is it that you would suggest I do, then?"

something ridiculous like perform some ballet for me.

"Get o your high horse and let her help you."

And it will help you."

feel the exact same way.

need to say it.

them at me.

"But you, you could get rid of it all." I hear myself whisper.

I shiver slightly, feeling utterly not myself. Barnes watches me

first time, I see a little bit of unease in his eyes.

"There's no way of getting rid of it." Barnes mumbles.

"Don't pretend." I hu, feeling annoyed.

"Pretend? Pretend what?" He challenges me back, looking dark.

"Pretend to be the victim." My words hit him and he looks like he wishes he could rip his arm free.

"Let her help me?" Barnes repeats as though I've suggested he do

"She helped me." I shrug. "It worked. Now I do apparently have this

"I'm not letting anyone in my head again." Barnes growls and I laugh

in exasperation, not at him, but because if I were him I would say and

little other problem that is kind of fucking me over, but it did help.

"I get that, believe me. And trust me when I say she is equally as happy about this as you." I pause, waiting for a reaction. Barnes is too stubborn though, so I continue. "You know it's Hydra that's behind her too... she's like us."

"She's nothing like us." Barnes snaps, pulling at his restraints.

From the corner of my eye, I see Steve getting up and Natasha placing

interrupt. As much as Barnes needs to be told this, I equally as much

"Yes, she is. She gets it more than you know." I pause for a second,

gathering my thoughts. "This... thingthat they've made us..."

I trail o, not quite knowing how to finish my sentence. I've got

Barnes' attention though. He's watching me like a hawk.

a warning hand on his chest. I'm grateful for her not letting him

"It's who we are." He whispers so ly, brokenly.

"Maybe. But it doesn't have to define us. This is your second chance.

Why won't you take it?" I plead and he finally looks down at the floor, breaking eye contact.

"Not everyone deserves a second chance." I can barely hear him mutter the words but they heat me as hard as though he had roared

"Bucky, if it means I get you back and we get you away from Hydra,

then it's worth trying." Steve is walking up to where I'm standing, his

Barnes looks up slowly, meeting his best friend's eyes. He seems to

deflate a little and I wish he wouldn't be attached so uncomfortably

eyes glued on the slumped form of his best friend.

to that machine. I doubt he has much fight le in him.

moment. Then he looks up again, directly at Steve.

"Alright. I'll try it. For you."

"I did this to you." I'm pulled back to the moment by Barnes addressing me again. "Why do you even care what happens to me?" "I don't know." I admit. "I guess... I just want something good to come out of this huge mess."

Barnes seems surprised to be thought of as something good. He deflates slightly more, looking older and more tired than before, and even his metal arm shi s tiredly. He looks down at the floor for a

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A/N: This one's a bit depressing, ngl. Next one will be stupid and fun (for the most part...) :-)

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