

Going Home

Walking back to the safe house, Bucky and Sam had gone a separate way. Attempting to keep people off their trail. As they walked along the road, the smell of ash and gunpowder all over them, Sam had queried Bucky on his feelings for Winter. Bucky had denied them completely.

"That's bullshit and you know it." Sam rolled his eyes at his friend. It didn't take a genius to see the two had this love, hate thing down to a fine art. You could feel the tension in the air any time they were in a room together.

"Doesn't matter how I feel Sam. Our job is to bring her in." The last thing he wanted was to put Winter back in a cell, but she hadn't let him with much choice. She had to be stopped, he knew that. He wished more than anything that she would let him in, like she almost had that night in his house. Winter always had a plan, today with Nagel, she'd lost control and he knew her walls would be stronger than ever because of it. He just couldn't seem to put his finger on her agenda. Her hatred for him he understood, but mindless killing? That wasn't his Winter.

"You're not here to bring her in and you know it." Sam looked at Bucky concerned.

"If I don't then others are going to die trying."

Sam knew Bucky was deflecting, refusing to talk about how he felt about her. Even Sam could see there was more to Winter than he first thought. She killed without remorse which was concerning, but there was more. "She's made it clear how she feels about you." He tried to keep his tone light, not wanting to upset Bucky.

"It's complicated." Bucky glared at him, signalling he was done talking about it.

"You think she was behind Steve going missing?"

"Not her exactly, but it was her idea." Bucky knew it was, she'd already been using Steve for some reason. Something that Bucky hated. So for Steve to go missing while his two best friends were away? It was more than a coincidence.

"Then who?"

Bucky stopped walking, the safehouse coming into view. "The one that didn't come with them."

That's when Sam clicked. "Loki."

When me and Zemo reached the house, we spilled out to quickly shower and change. Throwing on my usual all black outfit, I tied my hair up into a high pony tail, not bothering to dry it. I found Zemo sat with a solemn look on his face. He held out a glass of whiskey, which I gratefully accepted. I sat down on the sofa chair beside him. We both knew this was the end of our little adventure together. Getting out of the states undetected was one thing, getting back in was another. "They'll arrest you the second we land."

I was surprised at how much it genuinely saddened me, the thought of not being around him. We always said we weren't friends, I didn't do friends. However, sat here with him now. I could happily call him my friend.

"I know." He leant back on the couch, swirling the drink in his glass.

"What will you do?" I took a large gulp of the drink, letting the burn warm me up from the inside.

"Go home. Say goodbye to my family."

A comfortable silence settled between us as we both became lost in our thoughts. Him of his family and me of what awaited me back home. The thought of dealing with Loki alone filled me with dread. Not because I was afraid of him, but because I often needed Zemo to talk me out of killing the idiot.

"We didn't start out as friends, but if you need anything, you call me." He looked over at me, not saying a word. Like he was fighting a battle on the inside. Like he didn't want to leave, but we both knew he had to. "This isn't your fight anymore Z. It's mine." He continued to say nothing, just staring at me. I knew it's because I sounded more level headed, less full of hate. I gave him a smirk before finishing my drink. "Don't worry. I'm still the baddest bitch around."

That got him talking as he sat up straight. "What of the Avengers?"

"They will fall, SHIELD too. I've got one last Hydra target to take out. A personal one. Then they're next on the list."

He nodded his head, understanding the need for personal revenge. "I know you'll do it. Just be careful, Barnes will try to stop you."

"Then I'll take him down too." It was an automatic response at this point. I hated how much I doubted myself to harm him at this point.

Zemo scooped. "No you won't. You love him."

"No. I loved James. Bucky is a stranger." It was a lie and we both knew it but I refused to admit otherwise.

He stood up, coming to rest his hand on my shoulder. "Yet you love him anyway. You would've pulled the trigger by now if you didn't."

I placed my hand on top of his. "Shut up and get out of my house." I gave him a smile. "And stay safe, I can't be breaking you out of any more prisons."

He patted my shoulder before disappearing, I knew that would most likely be the last time I saw him. I felt oddly sad about that, the Avengers had classed him a villain. I couldn't deny he'd done wrong, but I could also see why. Vengeance and anger tend to cloud judgements, I knew that more than most. I knew I'd finish what he started, but I wouldn't do it through violence alone. Not if I could help it, there's more than one way to tear a group of friends apart and I had that waiting for me back home.

Walking on to the Avengers Quinjet wasn't something I ever thought I'd find myself doing. Yet both Bucky and Sam had assured me that I would walk away free when we landed. They had nothing they could prove was me. I knew they were here for me, they had been from the start. It's why I'd been careful in both what I said and did. It's why I made sure that Zemo killed Nagel, my promise to Sam didn't even factor into it. Zemo was already running, he'd ordered to take the fall. I hadn't killed Karli and they had no proof I'd ever met with her. The only solid proof they had was of me shooting people to save their asses.

Bucky sat opposite me, his eyes not meeting mine but looking me up and down. I knew I looked good, I'd made an effort today. Smokey eyes and a black lipstick swept across my lips. The marks on my neck finally fading into barely noticeable, so I knew I didn't have to cover them up. I winked at Bucky when I saw him smiling in his seat.

I was content to sit in silence, but it turned out that Bucky had other ideas. "So what happens when we get back Winter?"

I crossed my legs at the knee and picked at my nail varnish, feigning boredom. "You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone." He didn't like that idea and if I was being honest neither did I. However this was bigger than what we wanted, and he was still the last name on my list. I couldn't let myself forget that. The only way I was moving on was by finishing what I started.

"The killing has to stop." His steel blue eyes looked straight at me, almost like he could read my mind. Something in me snapped, I wasn't sure if it was him reading me so well. Or if it was something else entirely. "You never even stopped to see who I was killing." I was a bitch and the first winter soldier, but I wasn't a mindless killing machine. Not anymore.

"You said you had a list of names." Sam looked over his shoulder from the pilot seat.

"Clever puppy. Glad to see someone was paying attention."

Bucky sat up straighter, his glare intensifying. "Who else?"

I tapped my finger against my chin, pretending to think. Watching them both patiently waiting for my response. "You know what James? I think I'll keep that to myself for a while longer. Wouldn't want to ruin the surprise." I sat back in my seat, crossing my arms as Bucky stared at me. The tick in his jaw giving away how pissed off he was, it was oddly gratifying, knowing I could still get under his skin that way.

"Give us one reason to trust you." Sam's voice broke the staring match I was having with Bucky.

"It's simple Sam, you're still alive."

The rest of the journey consisted of Sam attempting to make small talk, Bucky doing nothing but grunting in response. While I sat and stared out the window, the next stage of my plan running through my head. Different possibilities and outcomes all being weighed up to determine which would have the higher chance of success.

Bucky's eyes never let me mine. Not even when Sam landed the jet, not even when I said my goodbyes to Sam. A half-assed promise to behave, Bucky finally turned away from me. As he was walking towards the armoured car I called his name. Walking towards him, my eyes focused on his. "One last thing before you go."

My hands cupped his face as I pressed my lips against his. It felt right, it always felt right with him. He tasted like home and for a moment I got lost in the kiss. However when I felt him almost melt against me, I took my shot. Biting down on his bottom lip, hard enough to draw blood. He pulled back, angry wouldn't even begin to describe the look on his face. "Don't look for me." I growled, my hand snaking around my back, reaching for my gun. Pulling it out I pointed at him.

"Or next time I pull the trigger."

"Go on then. Pull it." His voice was so confident it bordered on cocky. My grip on the gun was tight, yet I couldn't find the strength to pull the damn trigger. He knew it, his smirk giving him away. "You can't do it. Same as me." I couldn't bring myself to answer, too many emotions surging through me.

He simply smiled and turned away. "I'll see you soon Winter." I watched him getting into the car with a cocky grin on his face. Once the door shut I lost all control. Emptying the clip into the rear window as he drove off.

He was right, I couldn't do it. Luckily, I knew someone who would.

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