

Breakdown

It was a day later when Steve was finally well enough to talk to Bucky. They'd decided to go to a small bar not far from the compound, this was a conversation that needed to be had without anyone listening in. Grabbing a few beers from the bar they made their way to a small table at the back.

It was Steve who broke the silence first. "I'm not happy about the lying Buck, but I get it."

Bucky sighed, knowing he had to be honest with Steve, he owed him that much. "I should've told you, but honestly I was jealous." The

thought of Winter's hands all over Steve had him feeling all kinds of emotions. Something he didn't know how to talk about. He also

knew how Steve felt about her, how do you tell your best friend, that the woman he idolises, the one that gave him some of his confidence

back, was just using him.

"She never had feelings for me Buck, she always made that clear."

That was something he noticed about Winter, while she may skirt around the truth. It was rare for a lie to leave her lips.

"That's because all she feels right now is hate." Bucky began picking at the label on his bottle of beer. Guilt consuming him, he knew she hated him and she had every right to.

"She hates you because I took you away right?"

Bucky ran his hands through his hair. "I don't even want to imagine what she went through. I can imagine, I just don't want to." He knew

what they would've made her do, they always did when she failed a mission. They punished her more than him, thinking she owed them

more loyalty. They'd spent more time perfecting her, and when she failed they made her life hell.

Failing to get the information had Bucky on edge. He knew what they would do to Winter when they got back and he was powerless to stop

it. He pulled her aside as they neared their base.

"Promise me something Winter."

She sighed. "What is it soldier?"

"Don't let submit to them, when they find out you pulled me from their control again. They are going to do more than strap you to that

machine and we both know it."

It was no good pretending that his memories weren't coming through, the second they got back they would threaten her life and

know straight away. Bucky knew he loved her, he always would and what they did to her made his skin crawl. They called it training, to

anyone else it was something worse. Something no woman or man should ever have to deal with. Yet Winter had, over and over again,

for decades.

"With any luck they'll put me back into cryo. It's been three years now, they won't have me out much longer anyway."

"You never mentioned her before all this." Steve pulled Bucky from his memories. He knew Winter and Bucky had been through hell. The

last thing he wanted was for Bucky to blame himself for it, but he had to know why.

"How do you talk about leaving behind the only woman you've ever loved? The one that endured pain and torture for you on more than

one occasion. I failed her Steve. A er Siberia and everything with Tony I finally went to find her. She was gone." No one knew he'd gone

a er Winter, it was a mission he'd given himself.

Steve listened and tried to understand. He knew what being in love was like, he understood wanting to do anything to protect that

person. Even if it meant lying to everyone around him about who she truly was. With a sigh he looked over at Bucky. "You say loved like it's

past tense, we both know that isn't true."

"I'll always love her, I just don't think she'll ever forgive me."

Steve shook his head, refusing to let him give up that easily. "You don't become that vengeful with no feelings involved. You just need to find a way to get through to her."

"I've tried."

"Then try harder pal, because something tells me she's worth it."

Bucky knew she was, she'd always be worth it. He'd fight for her until his last breath, he just hoped it would be enough.

They both finished their drinks before heading back to the compound. Walking in Nat walked up to them, a worried look on her

face. "You need to see this."

Waking up it took me a moment to realise where I was. The bright lights around me obscuring my vision. Blinking a few times I sat up on

the creaky bed, swinging my legs over the side, I noticed my mask laying on the floor. That's when it all came flooding back. My

conversation with James, my admission to myself over what happened.

Loki looked up at me from his seat on the bench the other side of the cell. He didn't say anything, just waiting to see what I would do.

I stood on tired legs, walking round in circles, begging the flashbacks to stay away. The longer I dwelled on the fact I was trapped the worse

it got. I couldn't stay still, my legs wouldn't stop moving.

"Will you stop before you wear a hole in the floor." His voice halting my movements as I stared over at him. "You know how I feel about

enclosed spaces. No matter how bright and airy they seem."

He stood and walked over to me, placing his hands on my arms. "You are the strongest woman I know. You can get through this."

"I won't last much longer in here." I let myself look into his eyes as the tears began to fall once again.

He pulled me to his chest, rubbing his hands up and down my back. "What do you need from me?"

His support and caring should've helped calm me but it did the opposite, it angered me. I pushed his hands o me, running my

hands through my hair. "Stop acting as if you care about me!"

He didn't try to come towards me, but he kept his eyes on me. He knew I could read people easily, their eyes always giving them away.

"This stopped being about the tesseract a long time ago Winter."

That name again. I couldn't take it anymore. "Stop calling me that!" I screamed out.

He took a small step towards me. "What do you want me to call you?"

I fell to my knees, not caring about the pain that shot through them as I hit the ground. "That's what...he...I can't Loki. I-I can't!" My

breathing seemed to fail, I couldn't get enough air to fill my lungs.

Before I realised what was happening his arms were around me, pulling me into his lap. My head rested on his shoulder as I clung to

him as hard as I could.

"I've got you darling, you're safe."

I concentrated on his voice, the way his leather felt under my hands. He was anchoring me to the present, stopping me from losing myself

in the last.

"Make it stop Loki. I don't want to remember." I managed to choke out between sobs.

"I can't love." He turned to face directly at the camera in our cell. "I'm not the one you need."

He was right and I hated that he was, but it didn't change the fact I needed Bucky. He was the only one who ever made me feel truly safe,

and again he wasn't here to help me. I stayed in Loki's arms, silently begging the pain to stop.

Everyone had watched the scene with Winter and Loki unfold. No one had said a word, they all stood around shocked. The whole time

Winter had seemed like the assassin she'd been trained to be, yet now they were seeing a di erent side to her. Only no one seemed to

believe it was genuine.

No one except Bucky.

"We're letting her out."

Steve stood up and walked over to Bucky, he knew that Bucky would do anything for Winter. Yet his need to keep his team safe had to be

his first priority. "You can't be serious Buck. She threatened to tear us apart not twelve hours ago."

"This isn't an act Steve. Being locked in there, it's too much for her." Bucky knew she wouldn't react well to being imprisoned again, but

he had no idea it would be this bad.

"Zemo said she'd spent enough time locked away. Did he mean literally? Hydra?" Sam instantly put two and two together. His time

with Winter had changed his mind about her. There was more to her than anyone knew.

"More importantly it was the man she killed. Rumlow. Killing him has made it worse, she's literally reliving that memory over and over

again." Bucky felt sick to the stomach at the idea she was reliving the trauma he couldn't save her from. He told Steve he was going to fight

to get through to Winter and he would. Starting with getting her out of there and helping her heal.

"She cannot just walk away free." Nick walked in a er overhearing Bucky.

Bucky got up in his face. "Let her out. Now."

Everyone could feel the tension in the air as the pair faced o against each other.

"Your loyalty is misplaced."

Bucky couldn't help but sco at that. "For the first time in my life, my loyalty is exactly where it should be."

Steve placed his hand on his friends shoulder, pulling him back slightly. "Can you trust her Buck?"

He shrugged Steve's hand o with a hu before walking towards the door. "With my life."

Nick stepped forward, knowing this wasn't a battle he was going to win. "She stays in the compound and answers our questions."

Bucky glared at him. "Open the damn door."

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