

The Calm Before The Storm

I went about my evening routine as if nothing was wrong, every part of me wanting to get the evening over with. Dinner had been hard, the constant lingering touches from Steve had churned my stomach. All I kept wanting was to run in the opposite direction, as far away from Steve as possible. Yet I had to see it through.

I was in the bathroom adjoined to our bedroom, through the open door I could see Steve in the bed. He looked tense.

"Steve? You alright?" I asked as I finished brushing my teeth.

Steve looked up from his book with a nod. "Yeah, just a few things on my mind."

I gave him my best fake smile I could manage, ignoring how much I hoped his thoughts were tearing him apart. "You know I'm here for you right?" I offered him my support, playing the part of the faithful girlfriend. In truth I hoped he went to sleep and didn't wake up tomorrow.

"Come here." He smiled, opening his arms. "I want to ask you something."

Reluctantly I went over to the bed and crawled into his arms, leaning my head against his chest. It was strange how quickly someone that made me feel safe now had me feeling constantly on edge. As much as I was sure that I had been careful to cover my tracks, there was always a chance that he would find out what I was planning.

I held onto him tightly like I usually would, hoping to put any doubts out of his mind.

"What's wrong?"

Steve sighed, kissing my forehead. "Would you still be with me if Buck had never lost his memories?"

It wasn't the question that I was expecting but I did relax slightly against him. The answer to his question was a clear 'no' but I couldn't say that to him, not yet at least.

"I don't know, I'd like to thing so. What we have is special."

I could feel him smiling, the tension in the room becoming lighter with each passing second.

"I've never loved anyone the way I love you. There's nothing I won't do for us."

That's putting it mildly. Most women would be in awe to hear such words leaving the mouth of the man they are supposed to love. Not me. The words made my skin crawl to the point I wanted to tear it off my body completely.

"I know." I looked up at him, kissing his cheek. "I also know I've been distant, things are just so crazy at work right now."

It wasn't a complete lie, while I was spending more time at work, I was also finding any excuse I could to not be near him.

"It's never been about the sex for me. I'll wait until you're ready to try again."

"I'm working on it." I faked a yawn and small chuckle. "I'm tired. Can we get some sleep so I'm not falling asleep during dinner tomorrow?"

"Of course sweetheart." He tried to kiss me which I subtly avoided by kissing his cheek instead. He smiled down at me, not at all put out by me not returning his affection. "You know I can come help at the bar if you need me to."

"I know."

The bar was the last place I wanted him, especially with everything I was hiding from him. It was my base of operations, the one place I knew he wouldn't be watching me because I'd swept the place ten times over for any cameras or recording devices. The only ones in there now were ones I'd planted myself.

"I love you."

I swallowed the bile rising in my throat. "I love you too." I lied.

I tossed and turned for the entire night, something was shifting and I hoped that it meant this plan of mine was nearly over. I wanted nothing more than to run off into the sunset with Bucky, to make a life worth living. I wasn't the villain anymore, but I sure as hell wasn't a hero either. There was no way I was going to hang around and pretend otherwise, for once I just wanted to live my life for me. To have the happiness I've been denied for years.

When I woke up the next morning, Steve was in an overly chirpy mood. He passed me my morning coffee, kissing me on the cheek as he picked up his to go cup. I had no idea where he was off to but I was thankful that it would be away from me.

"So what is the great Steve Rogers got on his agenda today?"

He smirked before kissing me gently. "A few errands to run, but then I want to take you out to dinner tonight. I'll bring a present for you on the bed."

"Mr Rogers, you spoil me."

"Anything for my girl."

Hearing them words coming from him was more than slightly painful, I wasn't his. In hindsight I don't think I ever was. I always belonged to Bucky, from the second I'd laid eyes on him back at Hydra, he was mine as I was his. No amount of heartbreak or hatred could tear us apart. I acted as if I was blushing rather than the anger I felt causing my flushed skin.

"And where are you taking me?"

"Back to where it all began."

As I walked into the bar I breathed a sigh of relief, it was nice to be somewhere I felt truly safe. Henry appeared a few hours just as I was making a coffee. I didn't need to ask him if he wanted one, he always did. Graciously he accepted the steaming mug from my hands with a smile.

"Thanks boss."

"It's a bribe, I need you to close up tonight."

"Not a problem, hot date?"

If only. I imagined the day when I'd finally be able to dress up for a date with Bucky. Where I'd feel the butterflies in my stomach as I thought about seeing him. For now I had to deal with the heavy feeling that was washing over me. Tonight everything would come to an end. SHIELD would be there to pick up the pieces of Steve that I left behind and my life would go back to normal. Or as normal as it could possibly be.

"Something like that."

Before I could give him any more details Bucky's name began flashing across my phone screen, apparently he'd finally listened to the message I'd left him.

"I need to take this. Sarah and Kimberly will be in to pick up the lunch shift, if it's slow tonight feel free to close up early."

I left Henry and shut myself in the office, happy to hear Bucky's voice coming from the other end of the phone.

"Hey doll. Tell me where I need to be and when, you're not doing this alone."

I loved how protective he was over me, even now after everything we'd been through there was a part of him that would never stop protecting me.

"He's picking me up from work and taking me to the bar where we met." I tell him.

"I'll be there. This ends today."

I couldn't agree more, this whole facade needed to end because being apart from Bucky was becoming too painful. There was one other element to my plan that needed sorting before that could happen though.

"Did the cameras pick up where he's hid the book?"

"Yeah Stark is on his way there now."

A wave of relief washed over me. This time when we got the book back it was going to be incinerated, Tony had assured me of that.

I sat down on the small sofa in the corner of my office, sighing down the phone. "I can't wait for this to be over."

"Me too doll." I could hear the smile in his voice. "Then it's you and me, the way it always should've been."

"I love you so much."

"I love you too and I'm so proud of you."

Those words meant more to me than he'd ever realise. More than I'd ever admit to him. While I didn't necessarily need his praise, hearing it sparked something deep inside me. Something that began to knit together the wounded pieces of my heart.

With a promise to stay safe I reluctantly put the phone down. My eyes lingered over the box that Steve had left on the bed that was currently sat on the desk in front of me. I had yet to open it, but I had no doubt it was what he wanted me to wear tonight. As much as I wanted to burn it on principle, I knew that wouldn't make the best impression for tonight.

Tonight.

The night Steve gets removed from my life. The night I get to come out on top. No longer a victim but a survivor of his games, the games that would be the end of him.

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