

“Fuck!” I shouted, holding the base of the arrow, blood leaking around my hand. “How the hell did I forget about those fucking arrows?”

Bullets sparked through the doorway, peppering the far wall. Eventually they stopped and a voice came out from the vault.

“Steve Rogers. I didn't expect to see you so soon.” It said almost casually. “I don't suppose I could convince you this is a Shield operation could I?”

As the man continued to talk I stood up straight, my hand resting on Steve's shoulder.

“Yank it out.”

“What?” He said, eyes wide, darting down to the arrow. “But-”

“I'm wearing my healing amulet.” I said, a hissing whisper as my muscles convulsed around the arrow. “I need you to-”

He suddenly gripped the arrow and yanked, pulling it from my body with a spray of blood. I nearly passed out from the pain, my vision wavering and constricting to a dot before my amulet pulsed and my body started healing. Nausea layered over the pain as my internals shifted into their proper positions. I slowly stood up, giving Steve a nod and a shrug to Peggy, who was looking at me with wide eyes.

“I think it's time for us to negotiate. Your friend Bucky here-”

In one fluid motion I leaned into the door frame of the bank vault and flicked a card. It flew a few feet into the room, angling to the side before suddenly being replaced by the massive steel vault door. It tumbled through the room, all but smearing the archer who had shot me, continuing into the room and slamming into a wall with a screech. Even as the dust settled Steve and I both stepped into the room, guns drawn, his shield raised almost instinctively, bullets pinging off of it, though several also bounced off his lower armor. Peggy stayed by the door, firing her lever action cannon.

It was a bloodbath.

Bucky, who was still sitting on the foreboding looking contraption, sat there for a few seconds as Steve, Peggy and I destroyed the Hydra agents, our bullets punching through their body armor easily.

“Attack them!” The same voice cried out, clearly strained and in a considerable amount of pain, clearly talking to the brainwashed amputee.

Bucky immediately stepped up and settled into a fighting stance, his battered and broken metallic arm hanging limp by his side. His eyes locked on to both of us, before looking down to a shotgun, laying on the floor where its previous owner had dropped it. He took a single step forward before I burst into movement.

“BOOST!” I shouted, feeling the energy pour through my body.

I dashed across the twelve steps between us at blinding speed with explosive acceleration. Knowing I wouldn't be able to stop in time I held out my hand and slapped the unfortunate soldier across the face, his long black hair splaying out as his head turned. Before he could even react he collapsed backwards, my own sleep inducing ring leaving a noticeable indent on his cheek.

Unable to stop in such a short distance with so much speed I slammed into the back wall of the vault, denting the safety deposit boxes with my armor. I ignored the splatter of blood left from my stomach wound, or the searing pain sprinting like that had caused. Instead I pushed myself upright against the wall, turning just in time to watch Steve dispatch the last Hydra soldier.

The room was quiet for a second, both of us catching our breath before Steve rushed to Bucky's side, checking his vitals.

“His pulse seems okay.” He said, looking up at me and nodding. “We-”

“You... bastards.” The same strained voice said between coughs, causing Steve and I both to spin around, our guns raised.

There, pinned against the wall, was the gray haired man. He was in obvious pain, which made sense because a significant portion of his legs and lower torso were hidden, and probably flattened by the corner of the massive steel vault door. He was pale, though that was probably from blood loss, and struggled to hold himself up.

“How... How did you find us?” He asked. “Who broke? How?”

“I made something. Or rather several somethings.” I explained with a shrug. “There is no place on Earth that Hydra can hide any more.”

“Damn you.” He said, his voice getting softer. “The world needs us.”

“No. No it doesn't” Steve said, standing up straight, looking the gray haired man in the eye. “The world never needed Hydra. It didn't during the war and it doesn't now. The world doesn't need to be led with an iron fist, it needs to be guided with patience.”

“You're a fool.” The man said. Before he could say anything else I cut him off.

“Your time is over.” I said, looking into his eyes. “Hydra is going to be a shameful footnote in human history as we reach to the stars and do impossible things. We will dance on the burned corpse of your organization and wonder how people could be stupid enough to think that stifling humanity through control is how you improve it.”

The man, eyes locked on mine, let out one last rattling breath, before his eyes rolled back. He slumped over the massive hunk of steel pinning him to the wall, dead. The room was quiet for a few moments, filled with slowly cooling bodies, leaking blood and other unmentionable things.

“C’mon. Let’s get out of here. We can tell Fury about it when we are at my workshop.”

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It took us around twenty minutes to heal everyone that wasn’t already dead and relocate back to my workshop, everything gathered from our temporary lookout. I made special care to look through the vault to find all of the tank killer arrows Hydra had managed to get their hands on. In total I found three, which matched what Ema and I could remember, though we had know way of knowing if any of my other arrows remained effective after I shot them

When we got back to the quarry, Peggy immediately called Fury, describing how our mission went, while Steve and I laid Bucky on a mattress, raised off the ground by several crates. By the time the impromptu bed was set Peggy had returned from her phone call.

“Fury says a team is already on site to lock it down, go through everything and take anyone who survived into custody.” She said, walking back under the tent.

“Alright. We reapplied his forced sleep, so we should have a bit of time.” I said standing up straight. “I think we should start with my healing amulet. There is a chance it will affect his enhancements, and I’m not sure how it will react to the arm, but if his brainwashing was physically changing him the amulet should put him right.”

“And if it doesn’t?” Steve asked, his eyes on his friend before looking up at me.

“Then we restrain him better and I get to work making something specifically to break mind control.” I said confidently. “It might be difficult since I don’t have a lot to go off of, but Shield will probably find Hydra’s research on it somewhere, which will give me more to go off of. Absolute worst case scenario I will call in the favor Shield now owes me and have them design something to help fix it, then I stack it a dozen times until it works perfectly.”

Steve looked back down at his friend, Peggy coming up and standing beside him, reaching out and taking his hand. He gives her a small smile before looking back at me.

“Do it.”

I nod before stepping closer, pulling my amulet over my head. I leaned over for a moment before pausing, deploying my armor, even my helmet.

“This has a chance of waking him up, I don’t know if the healing amulet will recognize the forced sleep as a negative effect.”

Steve nodded and stepped closer, pulling away from Peggy, getting ready to hold Bucky down if necessary. With a nod I carefully put the chain around his neck, making sure the amulet was touching his body. I stepped back, watching him closely. A subtle tension in his face slowly faded, visibly changing to a much more peaceful sleep.

“Alright, that’s encouraging.” I said with a nod. “We’ll give it until the forced sleep runs out. If he isn’t better by then we will knock him out again and I’ll get to work.”

With the amulet hopefully doing its job the rest of us set up a rotation to keep an eye on Bucky while the rest of us got some sleep. It was late at night by the time everything was set up and Peggy and I were seriously starting to feel the effects of our lack of sleep. Steve of course was fine, and Ema didn’t sleep, but Peggy insisted that they both get some.

I woke up the next morning to find everyone else standing over Bucky, who was still asleep. I sat up and stretched before making my way over.

“What’s going on guys?” I asked. “Everything alright?”

I looked down at Bucky only to find his prosthetic arm had fallen off in the middle of the night. In its place was a fully flesh and blood limb, completely healed. Even the scars where his prosthetic had been attached had faded.

“Damn... that’s great.” I said with a smile. “I had hoped the amulet was capable of fixing limbs but I wasn’t sure.”

I bent down and picked up the arm, examining it for a minute before laying it on another nearby table. I took a look at my phone to check the time.

“Alright, we have an hour or so before he starts to wake up.” I said, taking a look around. “I’m going to grab some breakfast, I know I’m hungry and he would probably like a decent meal.”

Steve nodded absentmindedly, watching his brother in all but blood, while Peggy gave me a look and a smile. I walked out of the tent, Ema following me out.

"I assume you want me to stay here?" She asked as I shifted my clothes to their more compact and civilian looking states.

"Yeah, if he wakes up as the Winter Soldier you'll be able to pin him down pretty easily." I explained, pulling off my knockout buzzer and handing it to my partner. "Use that to put him out for another eight hours. And keep an eye on my Amulet."

Ema nodded and I traveled away, appearing back in my apartment. I let out a long sigh before rushing through a quick shower and heading out into New York City. I bought a dozen fresh bagels and some cream cheese from a nearby shop before finding an alleyway to travel back to the quarry. All of this took just over an hour, between riding my bike through the city and waiting in line for the bagels. When I got back everyone was under the large tent, with Steve and Peggy standing beside the now awake Bucky Barnes.

The haggard looking man was sitting on the edge of the makeshift bed, hands on his knees as he looked at the ground. Steve had his hand on his shoulder while Peggy rubbed his back. Ema, who had been watching off to the side, was the only one who noticed me, quickly heading out of the tent to give the three some privacy.

"He woke up a few minutes ago." She explained. "Screaming at the top of his lungs. As far as Steve can tell the brainwashing is gone, but... he remembers everything."

"Damn..." I said simply, shaking my head. "I honestly don't know what would have been worse, this or not remembering at all."

For about forty five minutes Ema and I sat outside, with me sitting on a rock and Ema making a lazy perimeter of the quarry, keeping an eye out, more out of habit than anything. I passed the time by making a few lists on my phone, preparing for a few crucial builds. Just as I was finishing one list someone cleared their throat in front of me. Bucky had walked out of the tent and was staring at me.

"Hey." He said, his voice a little rough, probably from disuse. "Steve said I've got you to thank for the quick rescue."

"I just make the stuff Mr. Barnes, getting you out was a three way effort." I said with a shrug, stepping forward to offer my hand. "It's good to meet you."

Bucky reached out and shook my hand, gripping it a bit tightly, loosening quickly however. He looked a bit lost when I released his hand, standing in the rising sun, looking around.

"How much did they fill you in?"

"The basics mostly." He said simply. "I remember almost all of it, not much to fill in."

I nodded, trying my best to seem sympathetic. After a moment I flicked out a card, pushing the tablet that tracked Bucky's location. I held it out to him.

"This is how we found you." I said simply. "It shows your location at all times. It's a bit invasive for me now that we have you back so..."

Bucky reached out and took the tablet, studying it for a moment before handing it back.

"I want you to keep it." He said. "I feel better, more clear. My memories of before are back... but I would feel better if someone could track me down."

"Sure thing Mr. Barnes." I said with a nod, re-carding the tablet.

"Bucky, please." He said with a small smile on his face. "You gave me back my life with a necklace. You can call me Bucky."

As if remembering something, Bucky dug into his pocket and pulled out my amulet, passing it back to me. I of course immediately put it back on, tucking it under my shirt.

"Thanks."

"How's your stomach?" He asked, looking down slightly.

"Completely healed." I said with a shrug. "The healing amulets come in handy. I'm honestly not sure even a head shot would have put me down at this point, at least as long as it didn't kill me instantly. Not that I'm jumping to test it out."

"Good." He said, his voice sounding like a cross between a warning and a confession. "If you hadn't disabled my arm I would have been holding that bow, And I wouldn't have been aiming for your stomach."

"Well then, I'm glad disabling your arm had the intended effect." I said with a small smile, standing up off of the rock and dusting myself off. With a flick of my wrist I summoned two cards, pushing the contents of both, one in each hand.

"Alright. You hungry Bucky?" I asked, holding out the two bags.

"... Are those bagels?"