

(thealientourist)

The mission was in Budapest, and nothing was going right. Clint wasn't sure exactly when everything had gone to hell, but it had, somehow.

It all started when Clint read the briefing packet. Recognizing the target wasn't uncommon for him, but usually when he did, it was because he'd worked with them and had seen what bad people they were. This time was different. Natalia Romanova, or Natasha Romanoff, or whatever it was that she was calling herself those days, had worked with Clint before, but Clint knew she wasn't evil – just like him, circumstances had forced her into doing the bad things she had done. Clint refused to think about the last time he had seen her, when those men had found him out – No. He wasn't going to think about those dark days.

Clint didn't tell anybody about his connection to the target. He figured that was extraneous information. (He didn't think about his lack of trust in SHIELD, either.) He just suited up and headed out to Budapest.

Clint hadn't been sure, before, whether he'd be able to make the shot, but now, looking through the scope, he knew that he'd never do it. He barely heard Phil's protests as he pulled the earbud – he was now down to only one hearing aid, but this was important, too. He climbed down from his nest and made his way over to the Black Widow. She removed her sunglasses as he got closer, showing how alert she was even when she didn't look it.

“Looking well, Hawkeye,” she said. “So much better than the last time I saw you.”

“I got a job,” Clint said. He didn't bother with pleasantries. There wasn't time for that. “It's a pretty good job, I think you'd like it. They'll listen to me if I tell them you want in, and I owe you big.”

Natasha looked at him long and hard for a moment. “They treat you well?” she asked finally.

“Better than my last employers.”

Natasha nodded. “I trust you.” She paused to let that sink in. The Black Widow's trust was not a small thing. “Let's do it.”

Later, after everything had settled down, Clint brought Mia in to meet Natasha. Natasha gazed down at the baby in her arms and smiled. It was the first real smile Clint had seen on her face since before they had been captured and tortured, and Clint's sex had been found out.

She said, “It's amazing that someone so lovely could come from something so horrific.”

Clint couldn't say anything in reply. His throat was prickly, and his breaths were coming in little gasps. Natasha wisely didn't say anything more about it, and so Clint just sat quietly in the safe presence of the only person who was at the event of Mia's conception and still alive.

(thealientourist)

What was supposed to be a quick errand had turned into more of a nightmare. Clint bounced Mia up and down in his arms both to distract her from the boredom of waiting in line and to distract himself from his overly full bladder. The press of the sanitary pad hidden deep in his pocket was strangely reassuring, as was the fact that his pants were black and wouldn't show any accidental bloodstains.

In the long, winding line, Clint, Kate, and Mia finally passed the bathrooms. Clint couldn't stand it any longer. He handed Mia to Kate and hurried off toward the two bathroom doors. He barely hesitated before plunging into the men's bathroom. There was a line, but it wasn't long, and it was mostly for the urinals. Clint went straight into a stall and sat down.

Clint cursed his traitorous bladder and uterus up and down while he tried to open the packaging on the sanitary pad without making a sound. It was impossible. Didn't the damn manufacturers realize that people's lives depended on these things being quiet? No, of course they didn't. Thinking of other people was too inconvenient for them.

Finally Clint got the paper off and stuck the pad on the inside of his underpants. He had taken long enough – at least it helped his cover. He stuffed the wrapper deep inside his pockets and, after making sure there wasn't any blood on his hands, headed out. He stopped to wash his hands, even though he was pretty sure most guys didn't usually do that.

A random dude stepped up to the sink beside them. He nudged Clint's shoulder with his own, said, "I won't tell on you," and guffawed loudly.

Clint thought his heart stopped. He managed a little chuckle but must have still looked puzzled, because random dude continued, "You know, eating on the toilet? I do that all the time, man. My wife gets so mad. What was it?"

Clint started breathing again. He chuckled, a much easier sound than before, now that he wasn't deathly afraid of something that could happen all too easily with no warning. "Reese's," he said, trying to make his voice go as deep as it ever would. The paper-wrapped candy was one of the first things that popped into his head that seemed remotely plausible, as it had the most similar sound to the pad he had actually been unwrapping.

The man chuckled again and left, leaving the bathroom momentarily empty except for Clint. He clutched the sides of the sink, reminding himself to just breathe, that nothing happened to him. That he was safe. He made sure once again that his period-related garbage was still tucked safely into his pockets and that it couldn't give him away. Then he left the bathroom to meet Kate and Mia, and he tucked his face into Mia's little baby neck.

*** (shadowen) 1

Clint never got The Talk. Not *that* Talk, the other one. The Becoming a Woman Talk. The first time he got his period, between the blood and the pain, he thought he was bleeding

internally until he remembered that, oh yeah, this was a *<i>girl thing</i>*. He went through an entire roll of paper towels trying to keep it under control.

Now, standing under the glaring lights of the grocery store pharmacy, he thought paper towels still seemed like the better option.

Tampons were right out, not least of all because they were horrifying, incomprehensible contraptions whose mere existence made Clint's already aching head throb. That narrowed down his options, but there was still a plethora of brands, styles, and features to choose from. What size would work best? Should he get the ones with the tabs on the sides? Did he need "extra absorption"? Were the off-brand kind just as good?

He was prepared to write off the scented ones without a thought, but then he wondered if maybe it smelled worse than he realized. Maybe the scent would help?

Clint groaned aloud and slapped the package he was holding against his head in frustration.

"Can I help you find anything?"

He jumped, startled to find a petite woman in a pharmacy vest standing next to him. "I, uh. Maybe?" She raised her eyebrows, giving him a knowing smile, and Clint sighed. "Yes, please."

"Mhm. Girlfriend got you running an errand?" she asked kindly.

On any other day, Clint probably would have said yes, just to keep things simple, but at that particular moment, he was just too pissed off to care. "They're for me, actually."

The pharmacist stared at him blankly until it clicked. Clint half expected her to back away slowly and call security, but all she did was smile and shake her head. "Sorry, honey, my bad. So what do you need help with?"

"Um. I guess... I mean, it's been a while since I... And I never really used..." Clint sighed again as her smile turned sympathetic. "Everything. I need help with everything."

She hummed again and tilted her head to look at the package in his hand. "Well, you sure as hell don't want those. They chafe," she said, and Clint dutifully returned the blue pack to its place on the shelf. Reaching for a smaller pink package, she asked, "You get a pretty light flow?"

Clint blinked. "Huh?"

"You bleed a lot or just a little trickle?"

"A lot," Clint answered immediately. "At least, y'know, now. I mean, this time it seems like there's a lot."

She nodded and picked up another package, this one in green. Indicating the green one as she handed them both to Clint, she told him, "Try these for the heavy days and the other ones if it lightens up." She gave him a quick once over and asked, "You get bad cramps?"

Clint grimaced in reply, and she nodded like she knew his pain.

"Little bit of nausea, too?"

"Little bit. Mostly just with the cramps."

"Alright. I think we've got some stuff that might help with that." She beckoned for him to follow her into the next aisle, heading for the pain relievers.

"I really appreciate this," Clint said, trailing after her. "Not just the help, but, y'know..."

She smiled at him over her shoulder. "Honey, I don't care if you're a man, a woman, or a little green alien. Us that gotta deal with Satan's gift basket need to look out for each other, and you seem like you could use a little extra looking out for, right now."

"Definitely," Clint agreed, and she patted him gently on the arm.

By the time he made it home, he had a bag full of sanitary items and pharmaceuticals, three pamphlets on feminine hygiene and health, and an entire half gallon of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream, which he proceeded to eat a quarter of straight out of the carton.

Phil gave him a curious look but said nothing and took care of all Mia's bedtime needs by himself. When he finally settled onto the couch, Clint offered him a spoon of his own, and they made it through most of the ice cream together.

*** (thealientourist) 2

It was a few months after Mia was born, and Phil was living with her and Clint mostly full-time. The two adults didn't usually share a bathroom, though; Clint used the one in the master bedroom, and Phil used the other one.

That was probably why Phil didn't notice at first what was going on with Clint. For a few days each month, he seemed more irritable than usual and maybe even in pain. Phil was having some trouble determining this last one, because Clint was extraordinarily good at hiding when he was in pain. Looking back on it, Phil was embarrassed at how long it took him to put it all together. It made sense, after all. Clint wasn't on any sort of hormone replacement therapy, and he was no longer malnourished or under as much stress as he had been before Phil brought him in.

As it was, Phil didn't notice that Clint had started menstruating again after not being pregnant anymore until he noticed a pair of blood-soaked underpants in the garbage. The blood was still wet. Phil was momentarily alarmed, thinking through everything it

could be, until it clicked in his mind, and then he just felt ridiculous for not realizing before.

Phil found Clint lying on the couch, watching TV. He wasn't wearing a binder, and he was absent-mindedly stroking his abdomen.

Phil went and sat on the other end of the couch. Clint immediately stopped rubbing his stomach and pulled his feet up.

Phil asked, "How are you feeling?" Clint tensed. He didn't look at Phil, and he didn't respond for a long moment.

Finally he said, "I feel just great. Why?"

Phil looked back at the bathroom. "Do you need anything?" he asked.

"Yeah, a new body," Clint muttered. Phil wasn't sure whether he was meant to hear it or not. He waited.

Clint sighed deeply and flung an arm over his eyes. "This doesn't mean anything. I'm still a man. Honestly, I'd prefer to just ignore this whole thing."

Phil smiled. "I know. You being pregnant didn't make me think of you as female – nothing will, not even this will, short of you saying it. But do you need anything to help you take care of it, or to help with the pain?"

Clint grunted, "I took care of it. But thanks."

Mia wailed from her crib. Clint groaned and made an aborted motion to get up. "On second thought ..." He looked over at Phil, and Phil got up to get the baby.

Once Mia was soothed, Phil sat back down on the couch with her in his arms. Clint still did not get up, although he smiled at his daughter and poked at her little legs with his toes. She soon fell asleep, and Clint wasn't far behind.

*** (dinosaur-princess) 4

Kate had gotten "The Talk" twice, first from her mom and later from her big sister. The first Talk, from Mom, taught her about her menstrual cycle. The second Talk, from Susan, taught her how to exploit it.

“Your period is five to seven days of cramps, headaches, and bloating,” the then-18 year old Susan explained. “But you can use it as an excuse with Dad. It’s like a Get Out of Jail Free card, and he’ll stock up on junk food if you mention it before a grocery trip.”

Kate did not want to give Clint the first version, but she knew the second version could benefit them both.

So after Mia went down for her nap, Kate sat down primly on the sofa and watched Clint put away the groceries. He noticed her staring and walked into the living room.

“Can I help you?”

“We need to talk.”

“Are you quitting? Don’t, please,” Clint said as he flopped down on the other end of the sofa. “Seriously, name your price and we’ll double it. Mia doesn’t nap for me or Poppa.”

“That’s because you’re too soft and she knows it,” Kate said, “but I’m not quitting. We need to talk about us.”

Clint sat up a bit straighter. “Whoa, what ‘us’ are you—”

“Are you taking any hormones right now?”

Clint bristled, “Kate, that’s none of your—”

“No, I’m not—UGH, I am doing this wrong.” Kate inhaled deeply. Exhaled. “Okay. If you’re not taking testosterone—which, by the way, is completely your choice and doesn’t matter to me at all—and you haven’t hit menopause, then you still get a period, right? And because you now live with another female, biology dictates that our menstrual cycles will sync.”

Clint looked horrified.

“Hear me out, this is not as bad as it sounds. We can use this to our advantage.”

Clint’s expression was now horrified and confused. Kate shook her head.

“Clint, relax. I’m talking about a week of In ‘n Out burgers, Oreos, and junk food.”

Clint looked like was beginning to catch on. *Finally.*

“Phil’s been on this health kick since we moved here. I’m all for organic, heirloom alfalfa patties, but a girl—or guy, in this situation, needs some junk food at least once a month.”

Clint’s lips quirked into a half-smile. “Heirloom alfalfa patties?”

“Dude, I don’t know. They were green and cost fifteen bucks a pound,” Kate sighed. “You’re lucky that you missed the Meatless Monday debacle.”

And Clint's face shut down. Dammit.

Kate slapped his shoulder lightly. "Hey, doesn't matter. You're here now."

"So what do we have to do?"

"Slump around the house. Groan a lot. Complain about cramps," she said, "basically, what've you've been doing, only with a goal." He shoved her playfully. "Then we persuade Phil to get us junk food."

"Tell me again how this is a good thing?"

Kate rolled her eyes. "How is it *not*? Think of it as a bonding experience."

"Bonding?"

"Yes. Temporary bonding, with your favorite ward."

"Ward?"

"Or whatever. Unrelated female person," she shrugged. "So, you in?"

"Hmm," Clint reached for his coat, retrieving his cell from the pocket. He started texting. "Okay, I'm in. But you have to tell me about this Meatless Debacle."

"Yes! Okay, so you know how the ceiling over Mia's high chair is missing some paint?"

(thealientourist)

"Are we almost done here, Phil? Mia's getting hungry." Clint shifts his weight from foot to foot. Mia, cradled safely in his arms, is whimpering and well on her way to full-blown sobbing.

Coulson is trying to find a specific book that doesn't seem to be there anymore, though, and does not respond right away. Clint glances around nervously. They're starting to attract looks from the other patrons, and that's one of Clint's least favorite things. It's the weekend, and the library is packed. Clint never would have thought the library would be such an attractive place to be, but apparently it is, and that means more people to worry about when he has a baby to feed.

Coulson finally turns around and gives the situation his full attention. He, too, quickly realizes that there aren't any places where Clint can go to bring his boobs out, someplace where he won't risk embarrassment and ridicule. There aren't even any universal restrooms. Unlike Clint, however, he soon thinks of a solution.

Coulson asks Clint, "I'm going to ask the librarian if you can use one of their private rooms for nursing babies. Is that alright with you?"

Clint doesn't know. He's heard of those, and he's pretty sure they're only for women, but he shrugs anyway and gives Coulson his permission.

Clint scurries after Coulson as he goes to the front desk. A librarian, elderly and smiling at them, asks, "Can I help you gentlemen?"

Clint hunches his shoulders. There's no way this lady is going to let them go somewhere only meant for mothers, and he's not a mother, even if he does have a baby.

Coulson doesn't hesitate. "My friend here would like to use a lactation room, please, if one is available."

Clint tries to look totally casual, like he does this all the time. It doesn't fool the librarian. "A lactation room?" she repeats, sounding incredulous. Her welcoming smile is long gone. "I'm sorry, but the lactation rooms are for nursing mothers only."

Clint had expected this, and now he wants to walk away. Only the sound of Mia crying in his arms stops him.

That and Coulson, who stands his ground. "It is for nursing *parents*," he corrects the librarian. "Clint is a *parent* who would like to nurse his baby."

The librarian looks suspicious. "*His* baby?" she repeats.

Coulson takes a deep breath. "Yes, his baby, who is also very hungry, as you don't seem to have noticed. Are there any lactation rooms available?"

The librarian doesn't answer that question. Instead, she points out a bench by the entrance. She snaps, "Your friend can bottle-feed his baby there!"

Coulson clenches his fist. The librarian doesn't see it, but Clint knows it's a sign that he's losing all patience. He takes deep breaths.

Clint decides to take over before Coulson becomes even more angry. "No, I will not bottle-feed her there, because I don't bottle-feed her," he says. "I'm transgender and fully capable of breast-feeding my child, who I gave birth to. We just want to know whether a lactation room is available right now."

The librarian's eyes slide slowly over Clint's body. It makes him want to go hide. Finally she hands over the key without a word. Coulson stays there while Clint goes off to the lactation room.

Mia finally stops crying and falls asleep once she's full of milk. Clint sighs as he puts his binder and his shirt back on.

He steps out to discover that Coulson's been standing guard.

Coulson says, "I spoke to the library director. This problem won't be happening again." Clint smiles. He's happy about that, but right now he just wants to go home, and so they do.

(shadowen)

Phil was familiar with the concept of the Terrible Twos. His summer job at the daycare had more than acquainted him with the horrors that could emerge in a room full of toddlers, but nothing in his experience with children, junior agents, or mad scientists could have prepared him for the task of trying to coax his shrieking, slippery, flailing daughter back into the bathtub.

That thought crossed his mind right about the moment her foot connected with his mouth, and he had to fall back, leaving Clint to wrestle her on his own.

Eventually, they declared a draw, mostly because all three of them were too worn out to fight anymore, and Mia was towed and bundled into bed, still kicking weakly and grumbling that she didn't wanna.

"I swear I only looked away for a second," Clint said. "The next thing I knew she was out of the tub and streaking for the bedroom."

The only thing worse than wrestling Mia back into her bath had been dragging her out from under the bed. Phil sighed, looking mournfully down at his dripping clothes, "Well, she's tenacious."

"Yeah. That's the word," Clint grumbled, and Phil could hear faint echoes of Mia's rebellious tone.

Phil suddenly imagined Mia at six, ten, fifteen, twenty-one, with all Clint's stubborn willfulness and wicked cunning. He shuddered. "I'm starting to think I'm not cut out for this."

Clint raised an eyebrow. "For what? The soapy toddler olympics?"

"No for..." He gestured vaguely at the closed door. "This. Parenting."

Clint's look of bemusement turned utterly blank. "Oh. Oh, well. I mean, I think you're great. Way better than me. And, y'know, Mia, she... But if you don't..."

"Oh! Oh god, no. I didn't mean that..." Phil shook his head. "I'm not making any sense. I need sleep before I can make sense. But I definitely didn't mean what it sounded like I meant."

"Okay. Good," Clint said, and his small, bright smile was the surest possible sign that he understood. "Because you're really pretty amazing at, like, everything."

"Bloody lip aside," Phil drawled. He reached to feel the cut again, but Clint caught his hand, grinning.

"I dunno. It's kinda sexy," Clint said, kissing him lightly. "You're a sexy dad."

"I suppose that's better than an embarrassing dad," he murmured, partly to keep from groaning as Clint trailed kissed along his jaw.

"No, I get to be the embarrassing dad," Clint replied. "You have to be the cool, hot dad."

Phil opened his mouth to remark on the obvious oversight in that claim. Then Clint bit down on his earlobe, and words were suddenly not a thing he had any interest in. They could decide what kind of dads they were and weren't in the morning. For now, it was time for bed.

(shadowen)

On the phone, daddy's voice sounded far away. Mia didn't know where he was or what he was doing, but she closed her eyes and pretended he was right there with her, sitting beside her on the couch and listening patiently. She could almost see the way his face got sad when she told him about the boy at school and the things that he said.

"And that's when you bit him," daddy said, when she had finished.

Mia nodded miserably before she remembered that daddy couldn't see her. "Yes, sir," she mumbled. Grown-ups liked it when she said 'sir' and 'ma'am'.

Daddy was quiet for a minute, then he asked, *"Has anybody said anything like that before?"*

Mia thought hard, trying to remember. "Laura Demopolis was really confused when I said I had two dads, but she wasn't mean about it."

"Good. I'm glad everybody else is nice," daddy told her, but he didn't sound glad. *"The thing is... There's gonna be a lot of people who aren't. You're gonna meet a lot of people who say things like that boy, and biting them isn't usually the way to go."*

"But they're mean! And stupid and dumb and I hate them!" Mia insisted. Poppa had told her the same thing, that a lot of people had treated daddy like he wasn't a person, and she didn't understand, because daddy was probably the nicest person in the whole world.

"Well, I can't argue with you, there," daddy sighed. *"You just have to... Just don't listen to them, okay? Don't you ever listen to them. People like that don't know the first thing about us and our family. They don't e-"* He paused. *"I bet your poppa already told you all this, huh?"*

"Kinda," she admitted. Daddy and poppa told her the same things a lot, but she liked hearing the differences in the way they said them. Poppa always made things sound smart and grown-up, and daddy made it feel like it mattered.

"Okay, well he's smarter than me, so he probably said it better," daddy said. *"Mostly just, y'know, don't let 'em get to you. And try not to bite people."*

"Aunt Maria said it's okay to bite somebody if they're trying to hurt you," she replied.

"Oh. Sure, alright. I guess, as long as you don't break the skin or anything. Never know what kinda diseases those kids... Anyway, let's try and use your words first. Okay, kid?"

"I'll try," she promised. Then Mia hesitated. She knew she wasn't supposed to ask when daddy was coming home or say that she missed him, so she told him instead, "You should come home soon. Poppa misses you a lot."

Somehow, when he laughed, it sounded even further away. *"Yeah, I bet he does. I promise I'll be back as soon as I can. How's that?"*

"I guess that's okay," she said, even if it wasn't. "I love you, daddy."

Daddy sounded a little different when he answered, “*Love you too, kid. Mind if I talk to the old man for a minute?*”

Mia dutifully handed the phone back to poppa, who took it from her with a smile and gently smoothed down her hair with his free hand. She moved over on the couch and curled up against his side as he said into the phone, “I told you Maria was a bad role model.”

Even from far away, she could still hear daddy laugh.

(the alien tourist and shadowen)

“Mia’s just pretending to be lost, Clint. Don’t go in there - “

“Did you say something?” Clint calls back. “I can’t hear you over how much fun we’re having.”

Under ordinary circumstances, in an ordinary ball pit, there would be no cause for concern. Except that this is a ball pit built by Tony Stark, so it’s big enough for *Clint* to get lost in, too. He keeps disappearing and reappearing, looking for Mia, until he just disappears altogether. It’s not like they can really drown, though, so Phil’s not really worried.

After half an hour with no sign of life, *then* he’s worried. He calls out, but there’s no answer. Here and there, a few balls shift, but he can’t see any movement. He tells himself they’re just playing around; it’s a *ball pit* for fuck’s sake. Still, Clint is the kind of unlucky that would end up knocking himself unconscious on the wall, and Mia’s just so tiny, and...

Everybody else has wandered off, so Phil loses absolutely no dignity by jumping into the pit. The balls come up to his waist, and he just knows that his pants are going to smell like industrial plastic for weeks. He keeps his feet flat on the floor as he wades through, trying not to slip on the balls that still manage to get underfoot.

Suddenly, Mia launches herself at him in an explosion of multicolored spheres, and Phil finds himself with his arms abruptly full of ecstatic 10 year-old.

"I got you! I got you! I win!" she shouts, loud in his ear.

From the other end of the pit, Clint emerges and wades toward them with a betrayed look. “You cheated!” he accuses her. “I don’t know how, but you cheated!”

Mia just sticks her tongue out at him and hugs Phil tighter. Phil has no idea what the game is or whether he’s the target or the prize, but he knows that he somehow played right into their hands

He’s completely okay with that.

After Mia catches him, the little family of three loses track of time. Mia and Clint dive in and out of the sea of little plastic balls, but Phil is a touch more reluctant. He didn’t grow up in a circus, after all, or with Clint as a father.

However, Phil eventually gets into the game. After the third time Mia snakes towards him underneath the surface without him noticing and then grabs his ankle (Clint makes a sardonic remark the second time, something about proper agents of SHIELD), Phil is fast enough to grab Mia up by the arms before she can escape. She shrieks with laughter as Phil throws her up into the air once, twice. Halfway through the third toss, Clint grabs her and they both dive back into the ball pit and disappear.

Phil goes back to the sidelines to wait them out. He knows them well. Clint could stay here for days if he were really determined, but Mia is a small child with a small stomach and, accordingly, a need to eat more often than her hardy father.

Just as Phil expected, less than a half-hour later, Mia's little head pops up and complains, "Dad, I'm hungry." Clint pops up in an instant, always attuned to his child's needs. They frolic back to the door, and Phil catches up to them there.

Mia wants Pop-Tarts, when they get back to the kitchen, but Clint pulls out the carrots instead. He tells her to eat five of them, then she can have one Pop-Tart, the one that supposedly contains ten percent fruit. Phil's tasted those. He doubts the existence of any real fruit content, but it's better than the s'mores ones that Captain Rogers eats an indecent amount of. (Thor has never quite gotten the hang of real s'mores, and is a bit sore about anything bearing their name.)

Mia doesn't want to go back to the ball pit that night. She just wants to curl up with her daddies on the couch. Phil reads Harry Potter aloud, since Mia is "too tired to keep my eyes open, Dad, please!" Clint curls up beside Phil, and they stay there until bedtime.