## **Everything I Can't Be**

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oh my, plot twist: bucky's up all night to get steve

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## **Everything I Can't Be**

by Little White Lie

## Summary

Steve was... well he was Steve. He was brave and moral and stubborn and honest and all that was good in Bucky's fucked up life. His roof leaked and his back ached and his whisky tasted like horse piss, but goddammit having Steve Rogers there at the end of a horrible day breathing softly in his cot on the other side of the room made all of that worth it. Steve was sunshine and swing dancing and a pretty dame's laugh all rolled into one tiny package, and Bucky just wished he had a pair of magic glasses that could make his best friend see himself the way Bucky saw him.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Bucky Barnes had always been a fucking fool for Steve Rogers, since the very first day.

Though really, what did he expect?

Sitting alone in the early morning dimness of their shitty little shared apartment, lost in a haze of cheap whisky and cigarette smoke, his mind went back to the first time he'd realized he'd die for his best friend. Steve had been five, and it had been raining. He had gone out for a carton of milk, a dime clutched in his grubby hand. Even though Sarah had wanted him to feel independent and important, she had asked Bucky, then seven, to follow him and make sure he stayed out of trouble.

However, even as a kid, Steve was drawn to trouble like he had an internal compass pointed straight to the biggest bully in a mile radius. When Bucky went out into the rain to follow him, he was nowhere to be seen. Bucky had found him when he heard the sounds of a scuffle behind the pizza place a block away from the grocers.

Steve had looked so tiny, all bent and broken baby bird bones, but even backed into a corner by three boys twice his age and three times his size he'd refused to give up that shiny dime. Bucky might've called the boys off with a bit of his famous sweet talking that worked on everyone from mas to cats, but then he saw the bruise forming around one of Steve's big baby blue eyes.

He'd flown into a rage, his seven year old body so packed with anger and fear and adrenaline that the three bigger boys hadn't stood a chance. The milk had been forgotten, and after that, Bucky had established a system of sorts. He couldn't stop Steve from getting into trouble, but goddammit he'd get him out of it every time. Come hell or high water, Bucky Barnes would protect Steve Rogers until the end of the line.

But now he was twenty and Steve was eighteen, and Bucky couldn't protect him from this bully. This evil, this horrible, corrosive thing that would eat up Steve's soul wasn't something he'd could punch in the face, wasn't something he could scare away with a witty comeback and a threatening smirk.

Because this bully was Steve himself.

That evening Bucky had returned from his evening job at the diner to find Steve curled up out on the fire escape, moving only to shiver in the bitter cold. Bucky had tried to coax him back into the slightly warmer apartment, but Steve had murmured that he was fine, he just needed air. Bucky had sighed, nodding, and went to find a blanket. When he had returned, Steve was gone.

He'd spent hours roaming the streets, screaming Steve's name until his voice was nothing but a hoarse croak. All at once he was seven years old again, looking for that little broken bird who had wandered off of the path, but this time there were no sounds of a scuffle to lead him to his best friend

Finally, defeated, he had returned home in the wake of the night shiftworkers, and once back to the apartment he had found the bully Steve was battling out there in the cold. On the scarred kitchen table he had spotted a crumpled up piece of paper, the thick yellowish stock of the sketchbook Bucky had saved up two months for to give Steve last Christmas. He had smoothed out the paper, and after taking one look had broken out the booze.

The picture was Steve, he knew, but he was twisted and deformed, like Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or the fetal piglets Bucky had seen in uptown butchers.

Now, bent over the picture, a half empty glass in his hand, cigarette smoke filtering out of the window he had left open because even when Steve wasn't there he didn't want to bother his lungs, Bucky couldn't understand how his best friend could see himself as this... creature. Steve was... well he was *Steve*. He was brave and moral and stubborn and honest and all that was good in Bucky's fucked up life. His roof leaked and his back ached and his whisky tasted like horse piss, but goddammit having Steve Rogers there at the end of a horrible day, breathing softly in his cot on the other side of the room, made all of that worth it. Steve was sunshine and swing dancing and a pretty dame's laugh all rolled into one tiny package, and Bucky just wished he had a pair of magic glasses that could make his best friend see himself the way Bucky saw him.

When the sun rose Steve still hadn't returned, and Bucky wondered if this was what an asthma attack felt like. He stared at the clock, watching the seconds tick by. It would be nine soon, and he would have to head to the docks. Two opposite and equal forces pushed and pulled inside his mind. Should he go back out into the watery morning light, Steve's name scraping his raw throat like shards of glass, or should he go to the docks and make enough money to keep the roof over their heads just one more day? Assuming there was a 'their'. Assuming Steve hadn't been left beaten and bloody in an alleyway, dying alone in the dark without Bucky there to save him...

He stood, the chair he'd been sitting in all night falling back and clattering to the floor, and grabbed Steve's jacket.

Bucky Barnes protected Steve Rogers, no matter what.

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He found him as the sun was setting, once again sitting with that unnatural stillness. Without a jacket his lips were tinged blue, but he just stared out at the surf crashing against the sand.

"This was the last place I thought to look," Bucky murmured, sitting on the little bench next to him. "Figured you'd be picking a fight, not taking a nice little vacation." He tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice, but it was hard when Steve was sitting there stiller than a statue, like he hadn't even noticed Bucky was there.

Around them the lights of rides and games lit them both with a rosy glow. Steve looked like a Renaissance painting, all delicacy and soft edges. He was beautiful, and Bucky wondered if he'd ever see it.

He put his hand on Steve's shoulder, holding on even when he flinched away. "Come home, Stevie, please. We can figure this out together, I promise. It'll all be okay."

Steve still gave no sign of hearing him, but when Bucky pulled him to his feet him made no attempt to resist. Bucky guided him away, under the bright sign flashing 'Coney Island', and breathed a sigh of relief when they were out of the oppressive light and sound.

Bucky was as gentle as he could manage as he lead Steve home, whispering little encouragements. When they crossed the bridge into Brooklyn, Steve coughed, and Bucky breathed a sigh of relief. That tiny response to outside stimuli... it wasn't much, but he no longer felt like he was dragging a coma patient through the streets of New York.

It wasn't until they were home and Bucky attempted to spoon feed Steve a bowl of baked beans that the light returned to his eyes.

He grasped the spoon, blinking the fog away, and shook his head slowly. "No," he managed to rasp out. "'M not... I'm not an *invalid*, Buck."

"I know," Bucky whispered, his heart soaring. "I know, Stevie."

Steve started eating his beans in slow, jerky movements. "I'm sorry," he murmured to his spoon. "I just... I couldn't take it anymore."

Bucky's heart, flying a moment ago, sank as fast as a roller coaster at Coney Island. "Couldn't take what?"

"Me."

Bucky shook his head, kneeling in front of Steve and cupping his face in his hands. He didn't think of how strange the motion was, how the little old ladies at church would positively faint at the sight, he only cared about his little broken bird with the bruised up eyes.

"Stevie," he whispered, pressing their foreheads together. "I wish... I wish you wouldn't..."

"Wouldn't what?" Steve snapped, pushing Bucky away. "Wouldn't tell the truth? Well it is true, and you can't stop it. I'm so *sick* of myself, Buck. I *hate* it. I hate not being able to breathe or run or fight without you saving me all of the t-"

"Stop." Bucky's tone left no room for argument. "Steven Rogers you just... you *stop* that." He gripped Steve's hands tight, refusing to let them go. Usually he would never even *consider using* his superior strength against Steve, but he couldn't let him get away, not this time. "How can you not know?" he whispered to Steve's hands, leaning down and pressing the thin, bony knuckles to his forehead. "You're everything, Steve Rogers. You're the whole damn world, and you can't even see it."

He refused to look up at Steve's face, but he knew what he looked like right then. Eyebrows furrowed, pink bottom lip poking out, big blue eyes squinted and quizzical. He was prettier than any dame, and it was about fucking time someone told him that.

"What do you mean?" Steve's voice sounded like it had last time he had gotten the flu, strained and weak.

"I mean..." Bucky paused, staring down at Steve's delicate, pale hands. What did he mean? Steve was his best guy, of course, but... But what? But Bucky loved him? How could he not? They had grown up attached at the hip. They were practically brothers.

But that wasn't all. Because Bucky wasn't a poet but he wrote sonnets about Steves eyes. Because he could kiss a thousand girls but the next day he'd still come home and stare at the way Steve's mouth tilted up just slightly as he sketched. Because Steve was beautiful, dammit. He could deny it all he wanted, think about God and laws and the little old ladies at church, but at the end of the day Bucky wasn't the sort of man to lie to himself, and saying he hadn't been head over heels in love with his best friend for most of his life... well that'd be the biggest lie ever told.

"Buck?" Steve whispered, and Bucky realized he must've been silent for a good long while. "You mean what?"

Bucky sat back on his haunches, shaking his head like a dog trying to shake off water. He couldn't figure out how to say it, but he was a man of action, after all, so he just showed it.

He knelt like a peasant before a king and pulled off Steve's too big shoes and three layers of socks before kissing the arches of Steve's feet, one after the other.

"Buck what're you-"

"Shh," he murmured, shaking his head, then kissed his knobbly little ankles. Steve's breath hitched as Bucky's mouth trailed up his calves, mouthing bony knees in turn.

"Bucky, you shouldn't. I'm-"

"Do you want me to stop?"

"N-no..."

"Then shush."

For a moment he rested his cheek on his lap, finally daring to glance up at Steve's face. His eyes were tightly squeezed closed, his face scarlet, his breathing ragged. Bucky reached up, stroking his chin with his thumb. He was met with a tiny bit of wetness, and he sighed.

"Steve. Stevie, look at me."

Slowly Steve complied, cracking an eye open to look down at Bucky, who smiled, feeling a little watery himself. "There's those pretty baby blues. Can you breathe for me, darling? Nice deep breaths, alright?" Steve turned even redder at the sweet talk, but gradually his breathing returned to normal. "There's a good boy," Bucky praised softly. "There's my wonderful Stevie."

"Why are you doing this?" The question caught Bucky off guard.

"Because I want to."

"But why?"

"Because my best friend ran away thinking he wasn't beautiful, and I need him to see that he's the most beautiful thing in my world." Saying the words was easier than breathing, and Bucky wondered why he'd never made an effort to tell Steve before.

Above him, tears were falling from Steve's eyes in earnest. Bucky reached into his pocket for his handkerchief. Even if it *was* a little grimy, he was as gentle as possible dabbing the tears away. "Don't cry, Stevie," he whispered. "Please don't cry. I hate it when you cry."

Steve sniffled but pushed Bucky's hand away. "Stop calling me that. I'm not five and you ain't my ma."

"Stevie," Bucky repeated, his voice soft and reverent. "I know you're not five, but I'm gonna take care of you all the same. Dry your tears, darling. I'm here."

Steve tried to shove him away again, but Bucky was having none of that. "I don't need anyone to take care of me," he choked out.

"Of course not." Bucky smiled up at him, holding him as carefully as spun candy or blown glass. "You're so brave. My Stevie, never backs down from a fight. But maybe *I* need to take care of you."

Steve's mouth opened, but Bucky knew he had him beat. He went back to kissing over his legs, soft and gentle. "I love your legs," he murmured, ignoring the squeak of protest. "They're so slender. When you walk you look prettier than a girl." He wrapped his hand around Steve's thigh and his fingertips touched. "Look at that. I can hold your whole leg in one hand."

"That's 'cause you have mammoth hands," Steve griped, voice trembling, but Bucky could see the tiniest hint of a confused smile.

Bucky beamed in response, but that faded when Steve shivered. Without even a word he scooped him up, ignoring the protests and bony fists beating against his chest. Steve didn't have to complain for long, however, because it was a short walk from the kitchen table to Bucky's cot.

"Oh," Steve breathed when his back hit the sheets. His cheeks turned pink again and he stared up at Bucky with those enormous blue eyes.

Bucky smirked, easing him under the covers. "Can't have my beautiful boy getting cold," he murmured. As he wasn't in the habit of lying to himself, he couldn't deny that Steve lying blushing in his bed was a prettier sight than any girl who had laid there before him. He slipped off his boots before crawling into the tiny bed. It wasn't really much of a squeeze, not with how little Steve was, but he pressed close to him anyway. Under the blankets, his hands went to Steve's hips, carressing over the sharp lines of bone. "I love your hips. Always scared

I'm gonna get caught starting when you go strutting through here in nothing but a towel. I wish I could draw like you, I bet it'd be bliss to draw them."

Steve squirmed under his touches, looking confused and uncomfortable, but his pupils had nearly consumed the blues of his eyes and Bucky thought he felt something pressing against his thigh, so he didn't stop. "They're *bony*," he protested.

"They're beautiful," Bucky countered. He pushed his hands under Steve's shirt, running teasing fingers over his stomach. He knew just how ticklish of a spot that was, and the chuckle he was rewarded with was better music than any band he'd ever heard. "I love your tummy," Bucky mumbled, ducking his head under the sheets to blow a raspberry into Steve's nearly concave stomach. Steve let out a peal of laughter, and Bucky felt his heart lift like a hot air balloon at a fair. "It's little and soft and just right for kissing," he punctuated the words with a kiss to prove his point.

He could hear Steve's breath stuttering in his throat and he pulled back, carefully helping him through some deep breaths. Even though he had left the windows open and the smoke had long since filtered out, he felt like the biggest ass for leaving the apartment in this state, letting smoke into Steve's lungs when they troubled him enough without Bucky's cig's help.

Once Steve's breathing was normal Bucky returned to kissing, pushing his shirt even farther up to bare his ribs. He kissed each narrow line of Steve's chest with utmost tenderness. "I love your ribs because they protect you when you get into all those damn fights." He laid his head on Steve's chest, listening to the quick *bumpity-bump* of his heart, fighting each second to keep him alive. "God," he whispered. "I love your heart, Stevie. I love it more that you'll ever know."

"I know." Steve's voice rumbled in his chest, soft and careful but still allowing no argument. Bucky believed him.

After several long, silent minutes in which Steve's heartbeat only got faster, Bucky moved to continue what he had started. He kissed up to his collarbone and down his arms, smirking at the sharp intake of breath when his lips brushed over his neck and storing away that little tidbit for later. "You're arms may not be strong, but they hold me so well. Never feel safer than when they're wrapped around me.

"And your *hands*," he groaned. "Stevie, your hands are absolutely sinful. I can never look away from them, never could."

Steve chuckled above him, but it was breathless and airy. Bucky could definitely feel something against his thigh as he kissed each of Steve's fingers in turn, sucking the tips into his mouth, just because he couldn't help himself.

When Bucky finally convinced himself to turn away from those hands, he ran his own over the crooked shape of Steve's spine. He knew Steve wouldn't want him to kiss it, not yet, not when he hated it so much, but someday Bucky knew that would change. He traced his fingers over each knobby bone, pausing whenever Steve's breathing got too ragged. "Thank you," he whispered, not to Steve, but to the bones unders his hands. "You're a complete

disappointment of a spine, honestly, but you still manage to hold him up. And for that..." He swallowed, his voice thick with emotion. "Thank you," he managed, after a few moments.

Steve looked nearly overwhelmed, but Bucky wasn't done, not nearly. He kissed up his neck, loving the little whines that Steve couldn't seem to hold in, no matter how much they made him flush in embarrassment. "I love your ears. They hear me say you're beautiful." He kissed them. "I love your mind, It makes you who you are." He kissed his temples. "I love your eyes. They're the only shade of blue that's ever mattered." He kissed the corners of his eyes, still a little damp with tears.

"But most of all," he whispered, hovering over Steve, pushed up to a push-up position so as not to crush that beautiful body he adored. "I *love* your lips."

He closed his eyes, relishing the little breath Steve took through his nose when he finally, finally, finally pressed their mouths together.

Steve tasted like rain, and it instantly was Bucky's favorite flavor. His mouth was so soft, and though he kissed back clumsily it was still the best kiss Bucky had ever had. For what could've been minutes or hours or days he just lost himself in the feeling, kissing Steve Rogers like he'd wanted to since the idea of kissing first became appealing.

Too soon, however, Steve was pulling away, and Bucky whined at the loss. His eyes blinked open and he was met with a shy, hooded eyed looked he'd never seen on Steve's face before. He doubted anyone had, the way Steve kissed.

"You forgot something," he whispered, startling Bucky out of his contemplation.

"Huh?"

"You forgot something," Steve repeated, still looking shy, but with a glimmer of... something else in his eyes. Something Bucky really, *really* liked. With trembling fingers, Steve took one of Bucky's hands and brought it behind him, pressing it to--

"Oh God," Bucky whispered, eyes wide. Never in a million years had he imagined that his modest best friend, who blushed at even the smallest mention of sex, would put Bucky's hand firmly on his cute little ass.

"Do you love this?" Steve whispered, staring at a point over Bucky's shoulder.

"Yes," Bucky breathed. In a motion he'd practiced on a hundred dames he flipped them over so that Steve landed on his chest with a tiny oof. Both hands went to Steve ass now, and he squeezed hard enough to bruise. (Not that bruising Steve was that great of a feat...) "Fuck, I love your ass. 'M always staring at it. Such a cute little bubble butt, always wanna-"

There he paused. However daring Steve might be acting, Bucky doubted he was ready to--

"Fuck me?" Steve whispered. "Stretch me open and screw me like one of your dames?" His cheeks were pink, otherwise Bucky wouldn't have believed innocent Steve Rogers was saying those things. "Make me scream? Make it hard for me to walk tomorrow?"

"Y-yeah," Bucky stuttered out, knowing that he certainly wasn't the only one feeling something against his thigh now.

"Good," Steve breathed, pushing back into his hands. "Cause I always want that too."

That was when Bucky's mind officially turned off. The idea of Steve not only being fully aware of how *it* worked between two men but wanting it as well? It would take a stronger man than Bucky Barnes to deal with that information calmly and rationally.

"Fuck." Bucky sat up, forcing Steve to straddle his hips, which did not help his current issue in the least. "Fuck, Stevie. Can I-?"

Steve answered by crawling off of him and grabbing the first aid kit under the cot. He pulled out a tub of vaseline and tossed it to Bucky. For a moment Bucky just clutched the little jar, mind reeling. He seriously considered pinching himself, the whole scene seemed like something straight out of the dreams he'd had as a teenager, the ones where he had woken warm and sated with sticky underwear and his best friend's name on his lips.

Then Steve was back on top of him, and this was too real to be a dream. Bucky's shirt got tangled and stuck when Steve tried to pull it off, and they had to stop every minute or so for Steve to get his breathing under control, and Steve flinched when Bucky touched his spine. It was imperfect, flawed in the best possible way, and when finally they were both down to their skivvies they simply pressed their foreheads together, breathing each other's air and laughing like children. It was simple. It was Steve and Bucky, the same as it had always been and always would be.

When Bucky's finger first brushed over Steve's entrance he squeaked in discomfort, and Bucky's hand shot away. "Fuck. Shit, Steve, I'm so sorry, I was trying to be gentle bu-"

Steve shook his head, eyes wider than a lost puppy's. "No. No no no. Don't stop. It's just cold..."

Bucky did stop, but only long enough to warm the vaseline between his fingers, and when he pushed the first digit into Steve he let let out a moan that Bucky would dream about for the rest of his life. It wasn't long until Steve was pleading brokenly for a second finger, and when Bucky crooked them just right he had to cover Steve's mouth to stop the neighbors from hearing him begging for, "*More* more more. *Please* Buck, give me more."

Three fingers in Steve decided he'd had enough of this foreplay business. "I've waited too long already," he snapped when Bucky attempted to protest, coating his cock in vaseline with those sinfully slender hands, and Bucky had to agree. Their whole lives up to this moment had been years of agonizing foreplay, and now here they were.

They didn't need to discuss how they would go about this; Steve was already straddling him and that way he could control the speed if it got to be too much.

When Steve buried Bucky inside himself he let out a sob. Bucky tried to still him, to find out what was wrong, but he shook his head. "S not... not the pain. It's just... you."

Bucky understood. Being inside Steve felt like a warm bath and coming home and a million other cliche things people compared really good sex to, but what it felt most like was *Steve*. Every aspect of his consciousness was pinpointed to the boy in his arms, and he'd never been so in love.

When Bucky bottomed out inside of Steve they were still for several moments. Steve clung to him, pressing his face to his shoulder as Bucky helped him take deep, calming breaths. Gradually the tears dried, the burning faded, and Steve slowly rose himself up until Bucky was almost out of him, then sank back down. Together they moaned, and then laughed breathlessly. Always together, Steve and Bucky, even moaning at the same time.

Laughter was soon forgotten, however, as Steve got into a rhythm. He alternated between slow, deep rolls and quick, shallow bounces. It was just the right combination of fucking and making love, and it was perfect. Steve was flushed down to his toes, his head thrown back in bliss. He kept making these little hiccuping whines, at least three octaves higher than his usual pitch, and Bucky knew he'd be remembering those sounds at the least convenient moments for *months*. He didn't care. Steve's skinny thighs were trembling with the effort to control his movements, and Bucky had heard him getting off in the dead of night when he thought he was the only one awake enough times to know what those tiny gasps of air meant.

He didn't think, just acted. He flipped them both over, wrapped Steve's legs around his waist, moving hard and fast and angling his hips towards that place that had made him beg earlier.

"Fuck," Steve breathed, his head pressing back into in pillows, sweat plastering his hair to his forehead. His lips were red and swollen and spit slicked from kissing and when his eyes opened there was only a sliver of blue around his pupils. Bucky was the only one who'd ever seen Steve like this and, selfishly, he hoped that that would always be the case.

"Buck," he rasped out, fingernails scrabbling over his shoulders and leaving a delicious pain in their wake. "Buck, 'm gonna come. Bucky... God, make me come."

Bucky Barnes had always been a fool for Steve Rogers, since the very first day.

He could never deny him anything.

His hand went to his Steve's cock, flushed and slick with pre, and he jerked him hard and fast in time with his thrusts. Within moments Steve was a mess, one hand gripping his own hair and the other doing a fine job of marking up Bucky's chest.

It was too much for Bucky. He'd been waiting too long. Steve was virgin tight and blisteringly hot and the most beautiful thing in the world, and the next thing he knew he was spilling into his best friend with the tiniest breath of, "Steve."

Then he froze because *shit*, this was supposed to be imperfectly perfect, not imperfect because Bucky Barnes came too soon and left his best friend hanging. His hand was still on Steve's cock, which was still hard. He could see his come leaking out onto the sheets around his softening cock. He looked up at Steve's face. His eyes were wide and his cheeks were scarlet. "Buck...?"

"Hold on." Bucky held up a finger. "I'm gonna fix this."

"Bu-"

Before Steve could finish Bucky wrapped his hands around his thighs, lifting his legs and placing them on his shoulders. He lifted his slender hips until they were level with his mouth.

"Bucky what're you-?"

He leaned in and licked a drop of his own come away from Steve's puffy red entrance. It was tacky and bitter, but the moan he got from Steve was more that enough to make up for that.

One hand holding Steve's hips up, the other stroking his cock, Bucky buried his face between Steve's cheeks and ate him out with gusto. His ass was tighter than a cunt, but loosened from fucking and full of come he was just as nice as any dame. Nicer, in fact, because this was *Steve*. Bucky was a strong believer in practice makes perfect, and he'd gone down on so many gals that within seconds Steve was on the edge. He licked all of his spunk away, cleaning Steve up like a proper gentleman, and when he swallowed the last mouthful he pulled away with a grin, the lower part of his face slick from spit and vaseline.

Obviously that sight was just too much for Steve, and he came with a broken cry. He arched in Bucky's arms, spilling all over his stomach. His hands somehow managed to get to Bucky's hair and he tugged on the strands so hard he feared it'd be pulled out.

He was breathing hard when he collapsed onto the bed. Bucky crawled up next to him, kissing as he went, then tucked Steve's small form against his body.

"Breathe, Stevie," he whispered, stroking his hair. "That's it. In. Out. Take your time." After a minute or so Steve managed to get his breathing back to normal. He turned his head, kissing Bucky lazier than a summer morning.

Bucky loved him so much.

"Hey darling," he murmured into his mouth. "You with me?"

"Until the end of the line."

FIN

Title taken from OneRepublic's "Come Home".

I do not own Steve Rogers, Bucky Barnes, or my own soul. All of those belong to Marvel. This work was beta'd by the beautiful thethingsigaveaway. Without her I am nothing. This is my first published fic, so I'd appreciate any comments, bookmarks, or kudos you think this deserves to let me know its okay. Or criticism, to let me know that it sucks, but I like the first choice best.

Have a nice day and I hope you find money on the ground!

Please <u>drop by the Archive and comment</u> to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!