

Mission #6

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/2649125) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/2649125>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Captain America (Movies) , captain america: the winter soldier - Fandom , The Avengers , Marvel
Characters:	Bucky Barnes , The Winter Soldier , James Barnes , James Buchanan Barnes , Howard Stark
Additional Tags:	Moderate Violence , memory wiping , brain washing
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2014-12-17 Words: 2,997 Chapters: 1/1

Mission #6

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Summary

The Winter Soldier is on a mission to eliminate a hostile threat. There is only one problem, he knows this man. It was another life in another time but that hair, that confident bravado... This is not some common stranger. This is Howard Stark.

I stood in the middle of the deserted roadway, awaiting my target. The beeping device attached to my left hip began to beep faster. It was almost time. I had chosen the location with great precision. The tracking device on the underside of their car told me which route they would take through the mountain pass. The portion of road I had chosen had a steep 130 ft. ravine on the left side and a sheer mountain cliff face on the right. As the beeping from my hip became increasingly rapid, I examined the road in the darkness. The stretch in front of me that I was facing went straight for about a quarter of a mile at which point the moonlight illuminated a slight curve around the mountain side. The pine trees growing in the ravine would provide a fairly rapid stop to what I hoped would be a violent freefall to their imminent deaths. It appears that I will have to revise my earlier approach.

The beeping from my hip was now a continuous scream of noise. I reached down and flipped the switch to turn the device off as I saw a pair of headlights rounding the bend ahead of me. I raised my rifle and aimed towards their tires. The moonlight glinted off the metal composing my left arm which was now just as much a part of me as my right.

The car came closer and I pulled the trigger. It only took one shot and they were careening out of control to the ravine. I could smell the burning rubber as the man at the wheel struggled to bring the car to a stop. He was unsuccessful and with the sound of crumpling metal, the car began to roll down into the ravine. As I expected, the car only made it 50 feet before coming to a stop on its side, supported by a group of pine trees.

I made my way down the slope with great accuracy. As I neared the car I could hear the driver moaning. The passenger, his wife, had a dent in her skull that was visible even from where I stood five feet away. The car was on its side in such a manner that the drivers door was pinned on the ground. a group of four loosely clumped pine trees were supporting the roof of the car from its continued decent down the hill.

I walked over to the front of the car to look through the windshield and assess how injured my target was. He lay in a crumpled mass leaning against the steering wheel, but occasional moans told me that he was alive. The steering wheel was blocking any clear shot at his head and his heart was shielded by the dash. It was in situations like this where my superiors would need proof of death.

Using my left arm, I punched a hole in the cracked windshield. I did not feel the pinch of shattered glass; after the procedure that left my left arm as an entirely metal machine, I no longer had sensation of anything below the shoulder. This is excluding my left bicep which can still detect immense pain if anyone were to cut through the five layers of metal protecting the stub that used to be my arm.

In a clenched fist I grabbed a fistful of the man's suit and with a sharp yank, attempted to pull him from the car. His feral screams pierced through the quiet night as I maneuvered him from the vehicle. I dropped him in a moaning heap at my feet and assessed the damage. The man had a badly broken leg and multiple deep cuts, but aside from these, he seemed all right.

I pulled my pistol from the holster at my waist and pointed it at the man's chest. It was then that he took his first look at me. The pain in his eyes turned to bewilderment and my finger

paused on the trigger. I had seen many things on my missions over the years, but I had never seen a target gaze into my eyes in complete confusion. I took a moment to examine this strange man. His soiled suit looked expensive and everything about him, from his clean shaven face to his piercing gaze, oozed with confidence and bravado. He had very dark hair and dark eyes but it was impossible to discern a color in the low moonlight. His expression of bafflement lingered and he opened his mouth to speak

"Bucky?" He whispered, it almost sounded like he was asking himself rather than me and I just looked at him in mirrored confusion

It was then that the memory settled over me like a net. There was a military base crowded with people. This man was there at one of the tables scribbling on a sketch that he had drawn of a battle vehicle.

I knew this man.

It was just a moment of a memory, a glimpse into a long forgotten past. I remembered very little about that life. Fragments of fragments of memories were left. I was not that person anymore.

The man stared at me with a confused hope in his eyes.

"Turn your head." I growled.

I was not about to be punished for my inability to complete a mission because some shmuck I used to know was being nostalgic.

The man continued to stare, the hope fading from his eyes and the confusion intensifying.

"I said turn your head!" I snapped, bringing the butt of the pistol down on his left temple.

He let out a sharp cry and fell to the ground, finally turning away from me. I pointed the gun at his chest.

Please don't.

The voice was quiet and broken but I was surprised to hear it, this voice that sounded identical to my own. I had heard it frequently in my earlier missions, begging me to stop. Begging me to fight back. Begging me to listen. There were a few time's I let the voice get the better of me. Those times had led to pain and suffering and torture. I could not let that happen again.

I pulled the trigger.

I realized before I had done it that I was standing too close. My black combat wear was spattered with his sticky warm blood. I didn't care.

I made my way back up the ravine and made the call to my superior.

"I have completed my mission," I say into the phone, "It was a success."

My voice is flat and emotionless.

"Good. Meet me back at headquarters for your debriefing." said the man on the other end of the line

A few hours later I found myself walking into the secret base in downtown DC. I walked through the dim corridor to the debriefing room, the sound of my shoes on the cold concrete echoed through the darkness. I opened the door to the room to find four armed guards and my boss already waiting for me. The room was made of cinderblock and concrete. The moment I walked through the doorway, the temperature seemed to drop by ten degrees. There was a single metal desk with two metal chairs on either side. The only source of light in the room came from a flickering bulb directly above the table. The guards were beefy and intimidating, wearing black Kevlar with multiple guns strapped to their thick bodies. The man sitting at the desk patiently exuded an aura of cold superiority. He was a Tall lean figure with dark black hair that had been slicked back. Outside this room, he might have looked like an average business man. He was in his mid thirties but appeared younger given that there was not a gray hair or wrinkle to be seen. He wore a plain black suit that suggested sophistication and a high net worth. I sat in the other chair at the table. It was at this moment that the voice in my mind made another appearance.

Why didn't you just back away? Why didn't you just put down your gun and run into the trees? They probably wouldn't find you. If they did, you could defend yourself. You don't have to listen to them.

Shut up.

You could just go. You could run into the trees while your on your next mission and never look back. You're smart enough to be able to survive out there on your own. You could start over and have an actual life. You could work on getting your memories back.

Shut up!

Or you could fight back. You're strong enough to take down the guards. They wouldn't be expecting an attack from you. You could escape. You could find Nata li a. You could tell her everything. You could start over. You could be happy.

"SHUT UP!" I shouted.

I had not intended to speak aloud. Everyone stared at me with piercing eyes, trying to assess the situation. I was supposed to be telling them the exact details of my mission, not responding to rebellious voices in my mind. If I did well, I was rewarded with another target and a new mission. If I did poorly, it meant pain, and torture, and suffering. I wanted to do well. Shouting shut up at them in the beginning of the meeting was never a good sign.

I stared at the peeling paint on the cinderblock wall to my right. To look him in the eyes was an act of defiance. Defiance was frowned upon here.

"Mission report." He demanded.

I did not know what to say. To lie meant cryo freeze If they found out. To tell them that the voice was back and I knew the target at another time meant torture. I decided being frozen in cryostasis was the greater of the two evils.

Cryostasis meant being frozen for years at a time. They put me in a chamber the size of a coffin and close the door. They then slowly began lowering the temperature in the chamber and I can feel myself start to shiver. The air is so frigid that my fingers and toes instantly began to go numb. It is so cold that it's painful. My breath comes out in sharp gasps. I quickly begin to run out of air. after a couple agonizing hours of feeling my own tissues freeze, I lose consciousness . It is a fate worse than death.

I looked back towards the man, about to tell him the truth, when his fist came down on my cheek. I had taken too long to answer. I knew better. His voice was more demanding this time when he said

"Mission report."

The voice in my head spoke again, a voice of rebellion.

don't tell them.

I have to.

lie.

They'll know.

fight back.

it won't work.

The words repeated over and over in my head

*don't tell them. lie. fight back. don't tell them. lie. fight back. don't tell them. lie. fight back.
don't tell them. lie. fight back.*

Over and over it chanted. A symphony of defiance.

I looked the man straight in the eye.

"Who was my target?"

The question took the man by surprise. He is not used to such curiosity.

"You didn't know him," he assured me, "He was a weapons contractor who recently found out of our existence. He was a threat."

He's lying. the voice in my head chanted.

You knew that man.

I know the voice is right.

The man at behind the desk walks over and kneels down in front of me. A warm sensation fills my chest and my left arm swings towards his face with intense speed, smashing his jaw.

I did not know what to say. The action was so unexpected that everyone in the room stood in shock over what they had just witnessed. The man touched his jaw and winced snapping everyone back into motion. Two of the men guarding the door rushed forward and restrained my hands to the metal chair. I didn't fight them. The voice in my head was silent.

"Prep him," the man said.

I cringed at his words. He meant conditioning. Conditioning was done typically right out of cryo when I am most vulnerable to manipulation. they take me into an empty room with concrete walls and floors then they beat me until I'm broken. Until I have nothing left but to follow them mindlessly where they drill every shred of self thinking out of me. Where they condition me into becoming their weapon.

There is a middle aged man in a lab coat that I didn't notice before standing next to the back corner.

"We can't" he replied. "He's been out of cryo too long."

The man in the suit gives me a long look.

"Wipe him." he says, his voice was cold and emotionless.

He gingerly touched the swollen bruise forming on his jaw where I hit him. The action looks so out of place for him to be using such care and gentleness when he typically only addressed me with calculated aggression. No sooner were the words out of his mouth then had three of the men near the door un-cuffed me and taken me to the box.

The box is a tiny concrete cell deep in the bowels of the secret base. The box was a two foot square with walls that reached around 15 feet in height. The door was four inches thick of pure steel with a small slot at eye level for surveillance. The ceiling of the cell was composed of metal bars about three inches apart, above which was the open to the air of the outside world. The faint moonlight seeping in through the ceiling provides just enough light to evaluate my surroundings. There was not enough room to sit down, so I leaned heavily against the wall, resting my feet against the closed door.

The quiet darkness is fuel for my confused mind.

The man said "wipe him". I don't know what this means. I have several memories; I remember being "defrosted" two weeks ago. I remember being frozen. I remember the five other missions and torture I have endured for the past ten years. I do not remember anything

before that. My earliest memory is of pain. I remember a burning searing pain that felt like every nerve in my body was on fire. I remember feeling nothing, seeing nothing, thinking nothing other than pain. I remember that my entire existence at that point was pain. I remember screaming. Even after the pain stopped, the only thing I recognized was the absence of pain. I remembered feeling raw long after the pain ceased. I remember when things finally came into focus. I was in a padded chair surrounded by beeping machinery. I remember wires and tubes attached to and impaled in my skin. I remember the man in the suit, much younger then, telling me that my name is James Barnes. That I am a skilled individual. That they had a problem that they needed me to take care of. I prayed that this was not what the man meant by "wipe him".

The voice in my head had been silent since the outburst. I was almost regretful that I didn't have the company. The silence of the box was suffocating.

It was so hot in the box. The heat radiated from the metal arm at my left side and it was only seconds before my clothes became saturated with sweat. I could hear distant traffic noises in the early morning hours.

The door opened loudly. It could have been five minutes later, it could have been five hours later. I had no way of knowing, but it felt like an eternity. Four armed guards pulled me from the cell and dragged me to a room that I had never been in before. In the center of the room was a padded chair surrounded by beeping machinery. The man in the lab coat from earlier stood next to the machinery. I stopped dead in my tracks. I knew this place. I knew this pain. I fought against the guards in a feeble attempt to escape. I felt the sharp pinch of a needle sinking into the flesh of my neck. I crumpled to the floor. I could feel, hear, and see everything, but I couldn't move anything below my neck. They dragged my lifeless body to the chair. They peeled the clothing from my skin in damp layers. The doctor began attaching wires to my skin and sticking needles into my arm. I opened my mouth so that they could put a mouth guard between my teeth. All the fight and defiance had gone out of me. The will to go on was obliterated. I was regaining movement of my extremities, but it didn't matter. There was no way I could fight my way out of this room. The doctor pressed a button and the chair began to move. My breathing became shallow and my hands shook with fear. Restraints folded out of the arm rests and settled firmly over my arms. I began to struggle and kick against my bonds but it didn't matter. Above me, I could see a metal arm-shaped vaguely like a helmet. I could see electricity cackling in the helmet and I knew what was about to happen. The arm would settle over my skull and all that electricity would surge into my brain; effectively frying it.

The arm came closer. It was only inches from my face. I began screaming. There wasn't even any pain yet, but sometimes the fear of pain is worse than the pain itself. I was shaking all over, violently. The helmet closed over my head and I couldn't see, couldn't hear, couldn't think. There was only blinding, excruciating, agonizing pain.

The End.

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