I know I’m a mess and I wanna be someone  
Someone that I’d like better  
I can never regret so don’t remind me of it forever  
What if I had just pulled myself together?  
Would it matter at all?  
**-Would it Matter by Skillet**

Clint continued running his hand through Natasha’s hair and murmured unintelligible words of comfort to her. The shock was still paralyzing. Natasha was his. He couldn’t just let her go like that, he wouldn’t. “We’ll get through this, Nat. I promise.” He would do anything to keep her alive, absolutely anything. He tilted her head up towards him and looked her in the eyes and said, “I don’t care about the cost or about the trouble it causes; we’ll definitely get you healed, got it?”

It sounded more like he was trying to reassure himself, but Natasha gave a sad smile and nodded. “Yeah, we will.” It was what she would have to believe to get through the night. She leaned up to place a small kiss on his cheek before leaning back into his chest.

“Thank you,” she murmured softly into his jacket. She needed the contact right now. It helped to confirm that she still existed. She had talked to Wane, but she had shied away from hugs and touches ever since that morning. Now, she could relax into his arms and feel safe. She buried into his chest and sighed. They stayed that way until the morning, holding onto each other and whispering sweet nothings into each other’s ears.

When morning came, Clint awoke to lying on the floor, but with no Natasha. He blinked groggily as he tried to remember what happened before shaking his head to clear the fog. That was when the memories of last night came rushing back to him. He slammed his hand down on the ground to get back up when he read a resounding crack. He lifted up his hand to see multiple shards of glass sticking into his palm. “Ah shoot.”

He bit his lip and gingerly brought himself from the ground and wobbled over towards Natasha’s bathroom. He shook the handle only to realize it was locked. “Nat! Can you let me in? Or at least pass a pair of tweezers under the door!” A few seconds later, a small pair of silver tweezers flew out from underneath the door.

Clint sighed and used his left hand to pick up the tweezers before returning to the couch. He wiped the couch off before taking a seat back. He winced as he heard the distinct sound of cracking pottery as he sat down. It would be awful cleaning this up. He violently yanked out the glass shards from his hands and dropped them on the coffee table. He waved his hand and let a few blood droplets fly through the air.

“Nat! I need a ban-aid! Or six!” He yelled from his spot on the couch. He was trying his best to act normal right now. This feeling was caused by either denial or by worry. Denial because he didn’t want to admit that there was something wrong in the first place. Worry because emphasizing Natasha’s illness was bound to make her feel worse. Natasha was the type to go assassinate a mafia boss with a broken leg and an eye injury. Babying her was sure to make her feel absolutely awful.

“You’re not helpless, Clint! And I’m sure you won’t bleed to death,” Natasha shouted back through the door. She rolled her eyes before turning back to the mirror. Her face was puffy from her tears and there were heavy bags around her eyes. She couldn’t go out to face him yet. She looked like the living dead. Ha, was she the living dead? The thought brought a dour look to her face as she turned the tap on.

She splashed yet another wave of water into her face before turning the tap off. She snagged a seafoam green hand towel from off the counter top and rubbed it against her face. *Get yourself together, Natasha! You can’t let them see you like this!* She dropped the towel back on the counter before back pedaling to the wall of the bathroom. She slid down to the ground and breathed in and out to calm herself. With any hope, by the time she left the bathroom she would look remotely normal.

“You wound me, Nat!” Natasha smiled. Clint had always known how to distract her, and right now, she was thankful for it. She leaned her head on her arms and stared at the door, knowing that Clint was probably waiting on the other side. Now that he was awake, she couldn’t take too long. Admittedly, she had already spent the past two hours inside of the bathroom, and it was probably time to leave.

“In any case, do you want to go down and get breakfast?” Natasha pondered Clint’s question. She was hungry, but... going downstairs for breakfast would mean seeing *them*. She couldn’t afford to break down in front of them. Clint was one thing, but no one else really *had* to know, right? But they would suspect something if she stayed up here forever... Ugh, what a nuisance!

“Sure. Just give me a minute!”

“I’ve given you almost fifteen while I bleed to death!” Clint quipped. The cuts had already clotted, so he wasn’t really bleeding, but it didn’t matter. He’d milk the banter for all it was worth. He rubbed his uninjured hand against his forehead. How were they even going to begin to explain what had happened to Natasha’s room? Maybe he could rent a Tasmanian Devil and let it wild in the room. It would at least add to the realism of the thing.

He looked up as Natasha exited the restroom. Her hair was ever so meticulously pinned back, but Clint could just detect the signs of the night previous in her eyes. Small streaks of red ran from her iris to the corners of her eyes. He kept his signature smile on and tried not to notice the way she looked as he walked on over. “Hey Nat.” He kissed her on the forehead and gave a cocky grin. He had to act like everything was normal, even if it killed him inside.

What he really wanted to do was hold her close and break down again, but that wasn’t what she wanted or needed. He was keeping himself together for Natasha, only for Natasha. “Let’s go,” She whispered back as she smiled slightly. She peeked through the door to check to see if anyone was there. She didn’t want to open the door for someone to see the room. She’d probably have to go fix it up later.

She slid out the door with Clint following after her, and the two went downstairs. The kitchen was located on the lowest floor above the lobby. When they arrived, Steve and Bruce were already eating at the dining table while Pepper was cooking in the kitchen. The three welcomed the couple into the room, but remaining absorbed in their food.

Natasha split off from Clint and wandered over beside Pepper. “Wait a second, Natasha,” Pepper said as she kept a spatula over the thick piece of egg. She flipped it up into the air and caught it again before carefully positioning it on her plate. “How are you this morning, Natasha?” Pepper asked amiably.

*Pretty darn awful actually. I feel like I have a ruddy hangover.* “I’m well. How about you, Pepper?” It must have been the way she was talking, because Pepper turned to give her a skeptical glance. Natasha watched as Pepper’s facial expression turned from relaxed to surprised to worried.

“No offence, but you don’t look well, Natasha. Did you come back from a mission or something? You look like you haven’t slept in days!” Pepper exclaimed as she sprinkled cheese into the proto-omelet.

“I just had some things to go over last night and it kept me up,” she lied easily as she looked over Pepper’s shoulder.

“This one can be yours. You like your omelets with just bacon and cheese, right?” Natasha hummed her response and looked back over to the table where Clint was chatting with Steve. She wondered what he was talking about.

“How was your night?” Steve asked while looking over his newspaper. He was the only one of the Avengers that bothered anymore as the others normally just checked a news website. There were just some things he couldn’t let go of even in the new century.

“You don’t want to know the answer to that,” Clint said as he laid his head on the table.

“What did you do to your hand?” Bruce said with a raised eyebrow. Trust the doctor at the table to be the only one to realize having a bloody hand at the breakfast table was kind of strange.

“I put it through a shredder,” Clint quipped as he made no attempt to explain what had happened. Nothing was coming to mind and if nothing presented itself then he wasn’t going to both to make an excuse.

“Uh-huh,” Bruce shook his head and turned back to his omelet. Both of them knew that Clint wasn’t just joking, he was lying. Quietly, Clint wondered how much more lying he would have to do now that all of this happened.