



A LITTLE ADVICE FROM SOMEONE WELL VERSED IN COLLATERAL GEAR DAMAGE--



--YOU SHOULD REALLY INVEST IN A BACKUP ARM.

BUT THEN YOU'D HAVE NO EXCUSE TO COME VISIT, TONY.

YES, BECAUSE I ABSOLUTELY LOVE DROPPING EVERYTHING AND RACING TO THE MIDDLE OF INDIANA TWICE IN TWO DAYS.

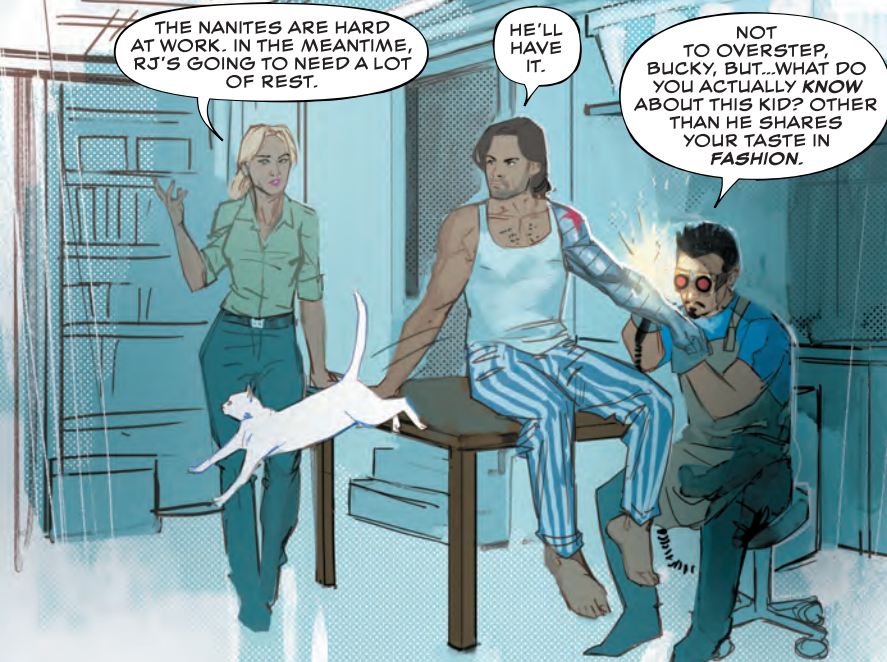
MEOW



SO NEXT TIME I SHOULD CALL IRONHEART. GOT IT.

OH, THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE TAKING AWAY FROM THIS?

HE'S STABLE.



THE NANITES ARE HARD AT WORK. IN THE MEANTIME, RJ'S GOING TO NEED A LOT OF REST.

HE'LL HAVE IT.

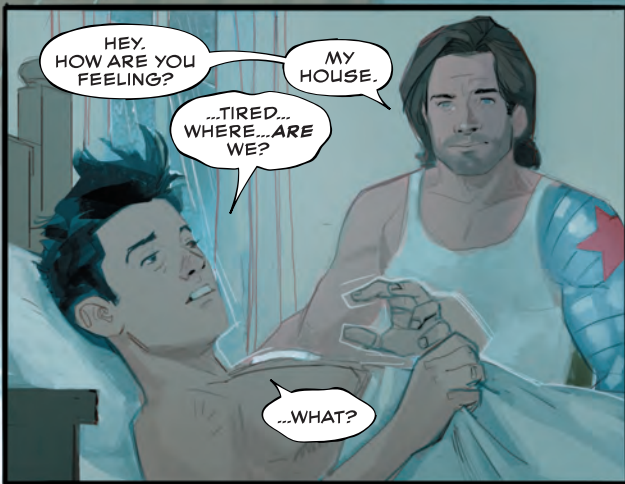
NOT TO OVERSTEP, BUCKY, BUT...WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY KNOW ABOUT THIS KID? OTHER THAN HE SHARES YOUR TASTE IN FASHION.



I KNOW ENOUGH.



-:COUGH:-
-:COUGH:-

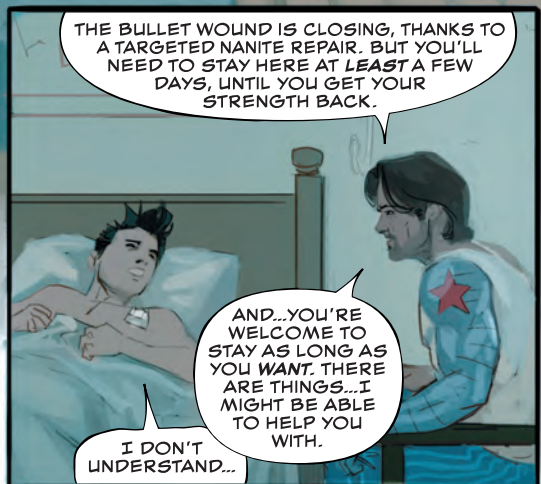


HEY, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

MY HOUSE.

...TIRED... WHERE... ARE WE?

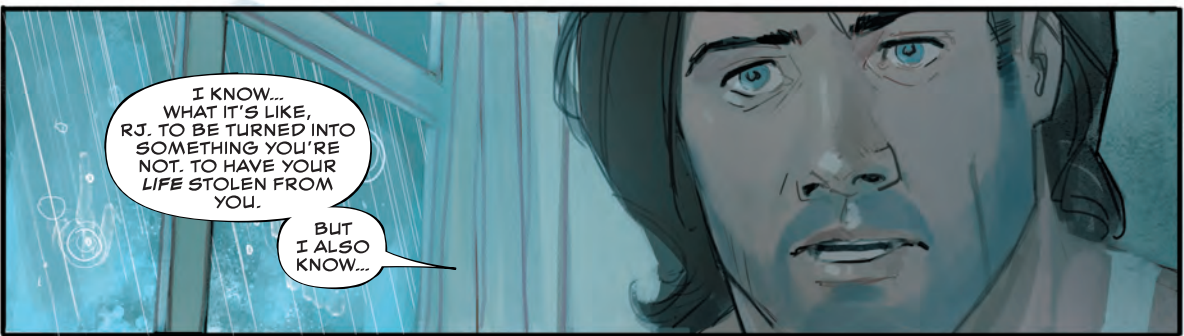
...WHAT?



THE BULLET WOUND IS CLOSING, THANKS TO A TARGETED NANITE REPAIR. BUT YOU'LL NEED TO STAY HERE AT LEAST A FEW DAYS, UNTIL YOU GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK.

AND...YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU WANT. THERE ARE THINGS...I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...



I KNOW... WHAT IT'S LIKE, RJ. TO BE TURNED INTO SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT. TO HAVE YOUR LIFE STOLEN FROM YOU.

BUT I ALSO KNOW...



...WHAT IT'S LIKE TO TAKE IT BACK.



TWO WEEKS LATER.

WOULD YOU MIND SITTING UP, PLEASE?
DO I HAVE TO?
WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS, RJ.



THANK YOU.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO TALK ABOUT TODAY?



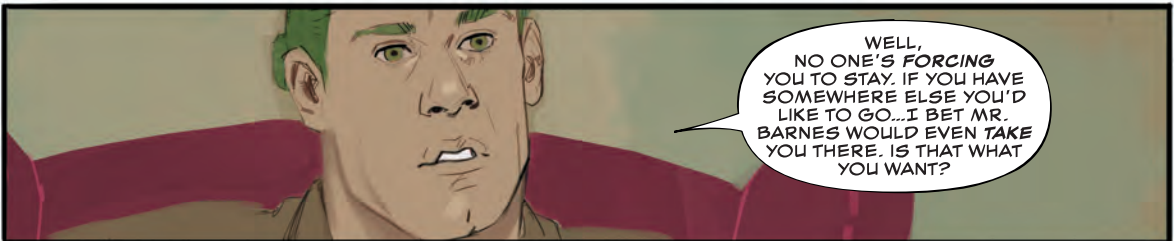
WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE.
I'M SICK OF TALKING.
WHAT ELSE ARE YOU SICK OF?



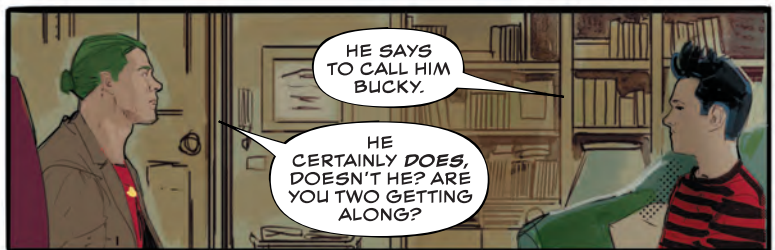
...
DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE?



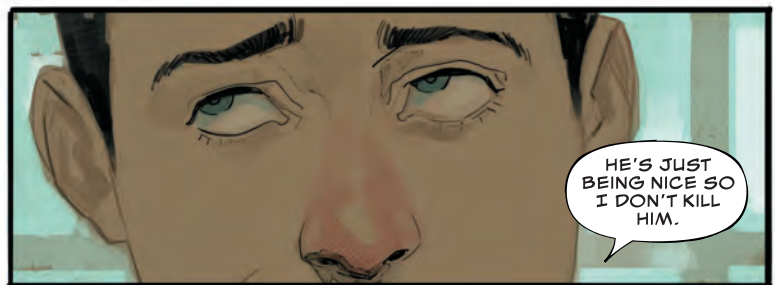
WHAT?



WELL, NO ONE'S FORCING YOU TO STAY. IF YOU HAVE SOMEWHERE ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO GO...I BET MR. BARNES WOULD EVEN TAKE YOU THERE. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?



HE SAYS TO CALL HIM BUCKY.
HE CERTAINLY DOES, DOESN'T HE? ARE YOU TWO GETTING ALONG?



HE'S JUST BEING NICE SO I DON'T KILL HIM.



DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S ALL THIS IS?



DO YOU WANT TO KILL HIM?

I'M SUPPOSED TO.

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT PEOPLE TELL US WE'RE "SUPPOSED" TO DO. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO.



YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH QUITE A LOT. IT'S OKAY AND TOTALLY NORMAL TO BE SICK OF TALKING. BUT I HOPE YOU KNOW...WE DO WANT TO HELP YOU, RJ.



MR. COLT GAVE ME SOMEWHERE TO STAY. AND INTRODUCED ME TO PEOPLE WHO COULD "HELP" ME.

HE ALSO SHOWED ME FILES ON ALL SORTS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE. INCLUDING ONE ON YOU, DOCTOR SAMSON.



I KNOW YOU WERE THE HULK'S DOCTOR.

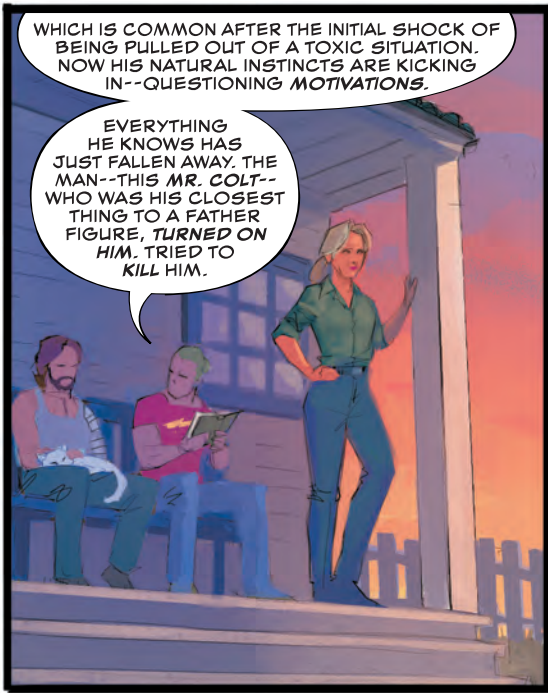
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, YES.

YOU SPENT A LOT OF TIME TRYING TO HELP HIM. BUT YOU COULDN'T.



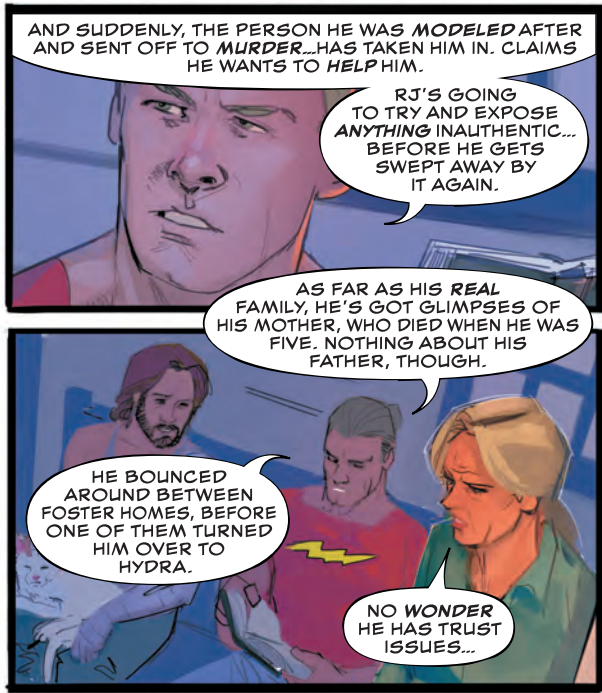
SO WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY?

"HE'S PUTTING UP MORE BARRIERS."



WHICH IS COMMON AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK OF BEING PULLED OUT OF A TOXIC SITUATION. NOW HIS NATURAL INSTINCTS ARE KICKING IN--QUESTIONING MOTIVATIONS.

EVERYTHING HE KNOWS HAS JUST FALLEN AWAY. THE MAN--THIS MR. COLT--WHO WAS HIS CLOSEST THING TO A FATHER FIGURE, TURNED ON HIM. TRIED TO KILL HIM.



AND SUDDENLY, THE PERSON HE WAS *MODELED* AFTER AND SENT OFF TO *MURDER*...HAS TAKEN HIM IN. CLAIMS HE WANTS TO HELP HIM.

RJ'S GOING TO TRY AND EXPOSE ANYTHING INAUTHENTIC... BEFORE HE GETS SWEEPED AWAY BY IT AGAIN.

AS FAR AS HIS REAL FAMILY, HE'S GOT GLIMPSES OF HIS MOTHER, WHO DIED WHEN HE WAS FIVE. NOTHING ABOUT HIS FATHER, THOUGH.

HE BOUNCED AROUND BETWEEN FOSTER HOMES, BEFORE ONE OF THEM TURNED HIM OVER TO HYDRA.

NO WONDER HE HAS TRUST ISSUES...

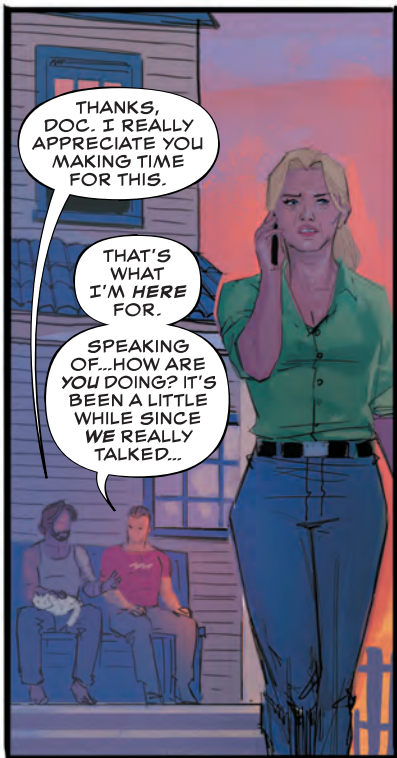


FOR NOW, THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS BE PATIENT. *POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT*. IT'S ABOUT DEFINING A NEW "NORMAL" FOR HIM, UNTIL HABITS AND PATTERNS TAKE HOLD.

HIS WHOLE LIFE HAS BEEN ONE BETRAYAL AFTER ANOTHER. WE NEED TO GIVE HIM *CONFIDENCE* IN PEOPLE AGAIN.

AH. I'VE GOTTA TAKE THIS...

DEET DEET



THANKS, DOC. I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU MAKING TIME FOR THIS.

THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR.

SPEAKING OF...HOW ARE YOU DOING? IT'S BEEN A LITTLE WHILE SINCE WE REALLY TALKED...



OH, UH...YEAH. I MEAN, I'M GOOD. THIS WHOLE NEW INITIATIVE WITH SHARON HAS ME PRETTY BURIED.

BUT... I'M DOING WHAT YOU SAID. FINDING TIME TO CLEAR MY HEAD. LETTING WHATEVER COMES BACK COME BACK.



ARE YOU KEEPING UP WITH THE JOURNAL?

OOF. I AM, YEAH. GOTTA SAY, I'VE GOT A WHOLE NEW RESPECT FOR WRITERS.



I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW HARD IT IS TO STAY HONEST.

EVEN KNOWING I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO WILL EVER READ IT.