



An easy peasy crash course of everything that has happened so you're ready when you get dragged to the movies.

THUNDERBOLTS*

Last Updated: April 2025

THE PLOT*

**according to the official Press Kit*

In “Thunderbolts*” Marvel Studios assembles an unconventional team of antiheroes—Yelena Belova, Bucky Barnes, Red Guardian, Ghost, Taskmaster and John Walker. After finding themselves ensnared in a death trap set by Valentina Allegra de Fontaine, these disillusioned castoffs must embark on a dangerous mission that will force them to confront the darkest corners of their pasts.

Will this dysfunctional group tear themselves apart, or find redemption and unite as something much more before it’s too late?

WARNING: Everything from now on is based on what I understood from the previous movies/shows & the trailers only, comic lore is nonexistent here. If I'm wrong about anything, my bad I tried my best girl.

SNIPPETS TO KEEP US THRIVING*

**in case you're a visual learner and need more convincing - click away*



THE MAINS*

**as far as we know from the trailer*



BUCKY



YELENA



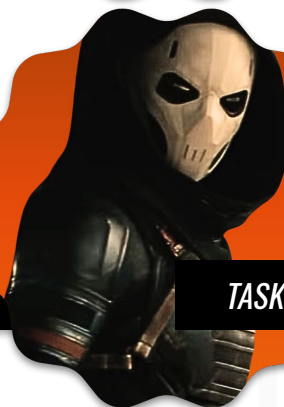
WALKER



ALEXEI



VAL



TASKMASTER



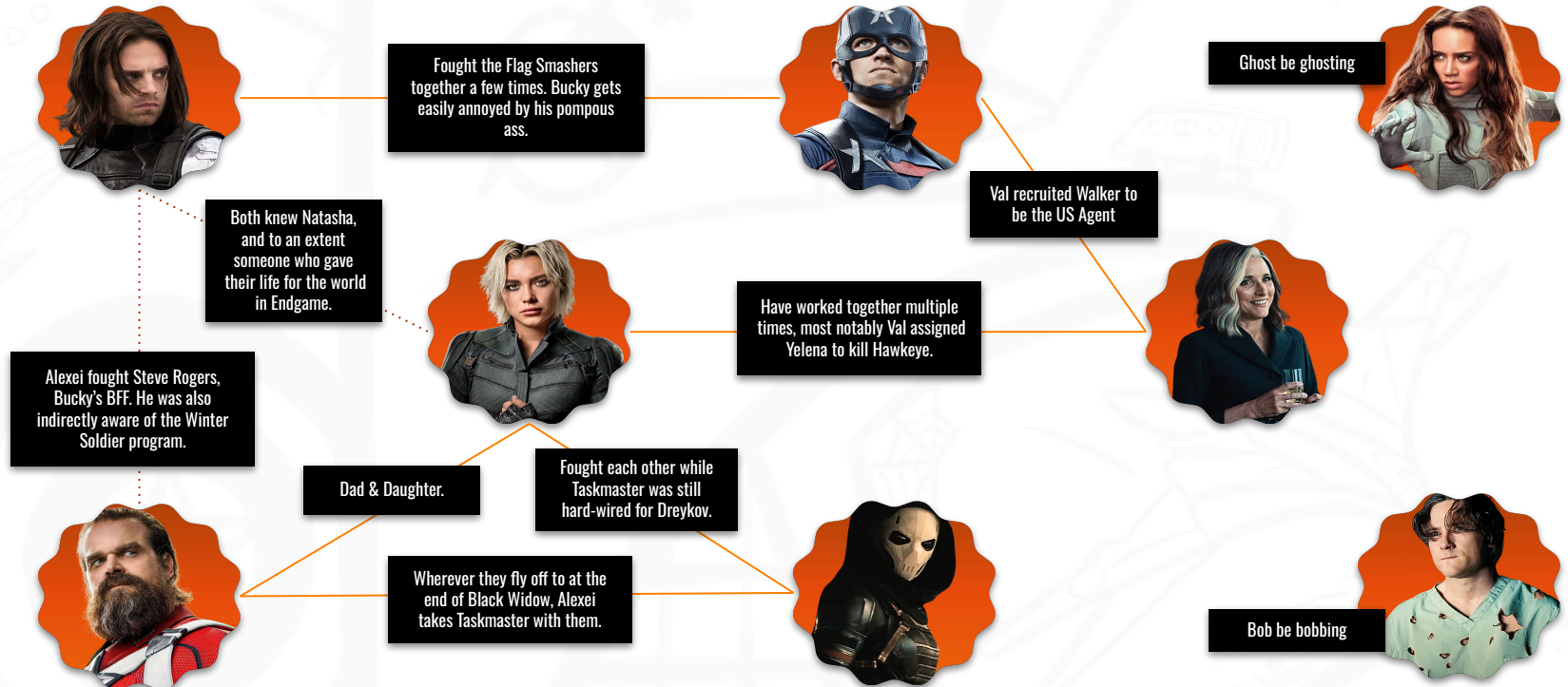
GHOST



BOB

THE FAMILY TREE*

**how the characters are connected up until now (only movie/show based, idk comics)*





VAL*

**Contessa Valentina Allegra de Fontaine*

Up until now she is a mystery woman with a heavy hand of power - Is she shady? Is she trustworthy? We don't know for sure yet. She's been sneakily collecting Thunderbolts like candy.*



Ma'am appears for the first time in a post credit scene where she approaches Yelena at Natasha's grave. Val seems to have been assigning missions to Yelena for some time before this. We have no clue who she is or why she's in cahoots with Yelena. She assigns Yelena to a new target - Hawkeye.



Turns out she's Director of the CIA. and her ex-husband is Agent Ross, who is operating on the downlow to help the Wakandans. Val is a Wakanda hater because she is on the side that Wakanda should share their Vibranium resources with the US. She hijacks Agent Ross' communications with Wakanda and has him arrested for treason. That's all we know from her, so nothing again.



After John Walker is fired as Captain America, Val finds him and gives him a new job with a new fancy suit as the US Agent. No idea what her intentions are with recruiting Walker at this point. At one point she alludes to knowing more about some Flag Smashers being killed on their way to prison (making "friend" Zemo very happy) - and for the hundredth time, no clue what she is getting at.

p.s. potential important side characters to remember >



AGENT ROSS



BUCKY BARNES*

**The Winter Soldier*



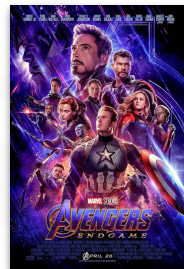
We get blessed with being introduced to Sergeant James Buchanan "Bucky" Barnes. He's childhood BFFs with Steve Rogers (OG Captain America). In the midst of the war, his unit gets captured by HYDRA and during this time it is insinuated HYDRA starts experimenting on him to make him a Super Soldier. He gets rescued by his BFF and goes onto to fight the Red Skull with him until he falls out of a train and "dies".

By some miracle Bucky survived the fall, "rescued" by HYDRA, and was further experimented on to make him the Winter Soldier. Completely brainwashed, has no idea who he is or anything about his past. Is triggered into Winter Soldier mode by 10 words, making him an insane killing machine. Tries and fails to kill Captain America, but during his final fight with him he seems to gain some memory of Steve back. Disappears for a hot sec.



Bucky has been laying low for 2 years, until he gets framed for bombing the UN (killing Black Panther's dad) and gets arrested. Zemo, who set-up the bombing, re-activates the Winter Soldier to help get info to eradicate all Super Soldiers. Captain America grants Bucky mercy leading to friction with the Avengers. Tony Stark (Iron Man) then finds out the Winter Soldier killed his parents. Bucky is pulled away from the fight with Iron Man, with no metal arm and ends up in Wakanda where he stays frozen until he can fix what HYDRA did to his mind.

Man is thriving with no arm, and tending to the Wakanda farmland until King T'Challa (Black Panther) gives him a vibranium arm in preparation for the fight with Thanos. Fights alien army alongside the Avengers. Turns to dust with the SNAP.



Bucky's in his blip era - 5 years go by as dust.

Returns for the final fight against Thanos and survives. After Tony Stark's funeral, a super old Steve Rogers presents Sam Wilson (The Falcon) with the Captain America shield - passing the baton to him. Bucky is there as witness and just kinda vibes with it.

Goes through a ton of therapy to make amends with his past as the Winter Soldier. He's been pardoned by the US Govt for all his crimes and is no longer activated by the Winter Soldier trigger words. Amongst a ton of bickering, he fights alongside Sam Wilson (new Captain America), to defeat the Flag Smashers. He also has beef with John Walker for taking on the Captain America title. Last we saw him he was happy and thriving at a Louisiana cookout, looking as fine as ever.



Popped-in for an express surprise cameo from which we learn he was running for congress (yeah wtf right), and is in a "love you" worthy friendship with Sam Wilson.



ZEMO

Newly appointed congressman who looks pissed as shit in the trailers so kinda worried about what led him to be so angry again. Appears to be the leader of the Thunderbolts but idk.*



YELENA BELOVA*

**Black Widow*

Super nonchalant, highly skilled assassin who is going from one mission to the next, trying to find her purpose and place in the world.



Little sister to Natasha Romanoff (Black Widow). Was involuntarily part of the Red Room's Black Widow program, that trained/brainwashed girls to become assassins. She breaks from the brainwash and is on a mission to free all the Black Widows. Her and Natasha get reunited and fight General Dreykov, bringing down the Red Room. Post-credit, Natasha is dead thanks to the events of Endgame. Val assigns Yelena to kill Clint Barton (Hawkeye), which she is fine with because, as far as she knows, man killed her sister.



After taking down the Red Room, Yelena continues to free Black Widows from the brainwash until she gets blipped, and reappears to learn Natasha is dead. With Val's assignment to kill Clint Barton (Hawkeye), she goes on to try and take him down. After many punches & arrows flying about, Hawkeye finally explains to Yelena that Natasha sacrificed herself. She decides to not fulfill her mission to kill Hawkeye (or his protege Kate Bishop), and walks away to who knows where. Oh and she likes boxed mac and cheese.



ALEXEI SHOSTAKOV*

**Red Guardian*

Sort of a delulu softie who is apparently the Winter Soldier's #1 fan. He's a proud father to Yelena, and seems to always be up for a good fight.



Yelena and Natasha's father figure/adoptive dad, raised the girls alongside Melina. He hands the girls over to General Dreykov who trains them in the Red Room to become Black Widows, and Alexei becomes the Soviet Union's first and only Super Soldier. He has one-sided beef with OG Captain America because he was defeated by him once upon a time. Him and Melina were undercover with Dreykov while her team developed the brainwash technology that became the Winter Soldier program - the ability to take over a subject's cognitive function. Years later, with the help of Natasha and Yelena, he escapes a Russian prison which Dreykov put him in. He relives his Red Guardian glory days with his girls and Melina, to take down Dreykov and the Red Room. He then escapes the Red Room wreckage with Melina, Yelena, Taskmaster, and a bunch of free Black Widows.



MELINA VOSTOKOFF



JOHN WALKER*

*US Agent

Former Captain America, who has a history of being made fun of by Bucky. Volatile character at best, seems to have good intentions but tends to let his emotions get the best of him.



Originally a well decorated and respected US Soldier, who takes on the mantle of Captain America after Sam Wilson hands the shield over to the Smithsonian Museum. He believes all his actions are done with the best intentions. Walker spends the whole series trying to fit the Captain America name by interrupting Bucky and Sam's battles with the Flag Smashers, as well as justifying himself to Bucky and Sam who are REALLY not happy he is carrying Steve's legacy. During a fight with the Flag Smashers, he acquires the last Super Soldier serum (which he drinks later), and within the same fight his partner, Lemar Hoskins, is killed. In retaliation, Walker absolutely pulverizes a Flag Smasher to death with the shield, leading the US Government to revoke the Captain America title and all his badges from him. He is then approached by Val to become the US Agent. Walker makes himself a less-cool version of the shield and does the bare minimum to help Bucky & Sam defeat the Flag Smashers.



LEMAR HOSKINS



TASKMASTER*

*Antonia Dreykov

We've seen two seconds of this character in the trailers so (maybe spoiler) don't get attached because she is very much expected to die.



General Dreykov's daughter *dun dun dun*, who everyone thought was killed as a kid. After she was bombed by Natasha when she was a child, Dreykov put a chip in her to keep her alive but she's basically just a shell of the person she was. Dreykov made her a human weapon, programmed to mimic the person they are fighting. Natasha exposes her to the Black Widow antidote and breaks Antonia from the Taskmaster protocol, bringing back her human side. She is taken in by Alexei and Melina to heal.



GENERAL DREYKOV



GHOST*

**Ava Starr*



Ignored her dad's instructions as a kid and was involved in a Quantum explosion in a lab through which she develops molecular disequilibrium which causes her to physically phase in and phase out. Both her parents died in that accident btw. Dr. Bill Foster, who worked with SHIELD, befriended her as child to understand her abilities. Other operatives at SHIELD decided to weaponize her and use her abilities for stealth spy missions, which she did for a while under the impression they would help find a cure for her condition if she obeyed. Total BS. But then she starts glitching/dying because she lacks quantum energy. To fulfill her selfish need to live, she almost puts Hank Pym's rescue mission for Janet van Dyne in jeopardy in order to get into the Quantum Tunnel herself. All is good, and she has some quantum energy transferred to her by the rescued Janet, stabilizing her making her less glitchy. Bill Foster takes her in. It appears the Ant-Man crew continues to go into the Quantum tunnel to get her quantum particles to keep her stable.

Glitchy McGee. Haven't seen anything about her in 7 years so no clue what her character is up to. We like her though, she's cool when stable.



BILL FOSTER



BOB*

**Probably named Robert plus some other moniker*

I don't know nothing about this man. Have never seen him in my life and refuse to Google him with the hopes to not spoil who his hero or villain persona is. We'll see.

Just BOB for now - we have no backstory on him yet. I think he could be the antagonist for this movie.

FINAL RECS*

**if you're bored and need to make use of that Disney+ membership*



Watch this to become familiar with Yelena's trauma and her relationship with Alexei. Taskmaster is also introduced but I'm pretty sure I've covered her backstory half decently.



Ghost's power may seem kinda whack so at least watch this clip or *Ant-Man and the Wasp* trailer to see what it looks like (overall it's a good movie so if you feel like watching it, go for it).



Watch this series to see John Walker's comeuppance and his downfall. Also worth watching solely for Sebastian Stan (this sassy Bucky era is top tier), Bucky's dynamic with Walker, and bonus for the Bucky & Falcon shenanigans.



Not necessary to watch for Thunderbolts* but highly recommend just for the sake of angsty and beefy Bucky, plus they're two of the best MCU movies imo.