

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: Moving along~**

**-x-X-x-**

“I took a chance with you Agent Carter and now America’s Golden Boy and a lot of other good men are dead... all because you had a crush.”

Peggy is more than used to men looking down on her for her gender and treating her like some silly girl who doesn’t know any better. She’s especially used to Chester Phillips, United States Colonel and Director of the Strategic Scientific Reserve doing so at this point.

What’s truly annoying is that the Colonel is at least partially right this time around. Steve Rogers is almost certainly dead, his ad hoc rescue operation that she and Howard Stark had decided to help him with having gone... less than according to plan.

The latest surveillance reports showed that the purported Hydra Facility had gone silent, but if Steve had managed to get the imprisoned soldiers out of there, he would have already been in contact at this point. That he wasn’t meant either he’d been captured and the base as well as the prisoners had been evacuated... or they were all dead, ‘disposed’ of.

Peggy can’t argue that she went behind Colonel Phillips’ back to help Steve try and mount his rescue of the 107<sup>th</sup>. While she has no regrets, she also has no excuses. That said, she also can’t tolerate the misogyny inherent in the Colonel’s final words. Keeping her composure and her tone level, she nevertheless bites back on that front.

“It wasn’t a crush. It was faith.”

Colonel Phillips gives her a distinctly unimpressed look at that, as well as a scoff.

“And where did that faith get you, exactly?”

Peggy grimaces, not exactly having a response to that. She really had put all of her hope on Steve coming back alive at the very least. Now that it seemed like that wasn't going to happen... well, all she could really hope for was that he wasn't being tortured or experimented on somewhere. Better a quick death than a slow, prolonged imprisonment given what their enemies were said to do with their prisoners of war.

In the end, she's saved from having to answer the Colonel's query by a sudden commotion on the other side of the camp. Phillips' intense glare breaks away from her as he looks past with a frown.

“What in Sam Hell is going on out there now?”

Peggy follows after him as he leaves the tent, watching as soldiers rush towards the camp's entrance. They don't seem like they're worried about an attack though. Instead, they seem excited. Peggy's brow furrows deeply for a moment... until abruptly unfurrowing, her jaw going slack as she sees Steve Rogers walking into the military camp at the head of a massive caravan of former prisoners.

The 107<sup>th</sup> had been rescued after all... and they follow Steve like he's an actual Captain, like he's their savior... the hero that Peggy had always known he would be.

Of course, among these men she can't help but find the two men flanking Steve on either side to be the most curious. On one hand there's a man she only recognizes from description... a man who can only be Steve's childhood friend, Sergeant James Barnes.

On the other hand, the other man is much more of an outlier. Dressed not in soldier's attire, but the ill-fitted attire of a civilian scientist complete with a dirtied white lab coat, he nevertheless has the physique of a soldier all the same. Tall,

broad shouldered and chested, and carrying himself with a strength that only Steve seems to be able to match.

Given they had to have marched themselves all the way back here all through the night without taking a single break, a normal civilian scientist should have been barely on his feet. Instead, it doesn't look like he's even sweating...

Her confusion and intrigue is set aside for a moment though as Steve arrives in front of Colonel Phillips and offers up a crisp salute.

"Sir. We have wounded who need immediate medical attention. And... I'd like to surrender myself for immediate disciplinary action."

As medics rush by to get the most wounded from the caravan of prisoners onto stretchers or just grab the stretchers they're already on, silence fills the air for just a moment. Everyone waits to see how Colonel Phillips will respond, Peggy included. But of course, she knows better than most that in a situation like this... there's only one response he can give.

"That won't be necessary. Welcome back Captain Rogers."

The Colonel might have left it at just that... but it seems he noticed the strangeness of the man just the same as Peggy did. His eyes sweep over the 'scientist' and he frowns slightly before looking back to Steve.

"Care to introduce your... friend?"

To Peggy's surprise, Sergeant Barnes is the one to speak up rather than Steve. Clearing his throat, the sickly looking man steps forward.

"This is Mike. He's Danish. Germans picked him up and conscripted him for his brains... but he resisted them as best he could. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for his efforts."

By the time Barnes is done talking, he seems to be swaying on his feet and looks ready to keel over. Steve moves to catch him... but before the man can, this 'Mike' fellow is at Barnes' side instead, Peggy's eyes widening at his speed.

"Apologies, but Sergeant Barnes is suffering from pneumonia and needs immediate medical attention."

Looking a lot more woozy, Barnes clings to Mike.

"S my doctor... can't separate a man from his doctor..."

Peggy can tell that the Colonel isn't fully convinced by the act. She certainly isn't either. But this is obviously not the time to press... and in Phillips' case, he just gives her a quick look, making it clear that he expects her to figure out what's going on in the end. Peggy nods ever so slightly, which he takes as his cue to depart.

"Well then let's get the Sergeant some help. And once again, welcome back Captain."

With that, the Colonel walks away. Peggy looks between Steve, Bucky, and the mysterious Mike for a long moment before plastering a smile on her face.

"Right this way to the medical tent."

The three men all follow her and it's during this time that Peggy gives Steve a reproachful look, albeit one without much heat in it.

"You're late, you know."

In response, Steve offers a crooked smile as he pulls out the communicator he was supposed to use to signal for pickup. It has a chunk taken out of it from where a bullet clearly hit it.

"Couldn't call my ride, unfortunately."

Peggy just huffs at that and faces forward... only for Steve to clear his throat.

“Oh right, introductions. Mike this is Agent Peggy Carter with the Strategic Scientific Reserve. Peggy, this is Mike... he’s Danish.”

That last part sounds like an even bigger lie coming out of Steve’s mouth than it did coming out of Barnes’. But for the moment at least, Peggy just offers ‘Mike’ a smile and a nod, which he returns. And then they’re arriving at the medical tent to get Bucky Barnes some much needed antibiotics.

-x-X-x-

Myk-Zod was already under suspicions, he was pretty sure. But then, that was fair. And it was probably better than being an outed alien from another world if Bucky’s worries were in any way valid. Still, his options for disguises back at the Hydra Base had been... limited.

In the end, stealing the clothing of Arnim Zola’s last assistant had been the best of bad options considering his other two choices were to strip either a dead recently freed soldier or a dead Hydra Guard of THEIR clothes instead.

It was far from perfect though for a variety of reasons. For one, while Zola’s assistant was a little taller than the short man himself, he was still not as tall as Myk-Zod, who was in fact of a similar height with Steve Rogers. So the clothing did not fit as well as it could have, leaving it straining against his physique.

For two, at this point he was forced to admit that what was considered an average Kryptonian Physique seemed closer to the pinnacle for human beings, making him stand out even more. He might have been better off trying to pass as some defecting Hydra Guard rather than a scientist who had been involuntarily conscripted by Hydra forces as Bucky and Steve had come up with.

For three... well, he couldn’t really do anything about this part, but Myk-Zod wasn’t stupid. He knew full well that much like pretty much everyone else that had been rescued from Hydra’s care, he should have been dead on his feet. And to be fair, initially he was... back when it was still the dead of the night.

However, then the sun had risen over the horizon and the Kryptonian had learned something very valuable about this new planet he found himself on. Namely, it had a Yellow Sun. The instant the rays of that Yellow Sun had first hit Myk-Zod's face, he'd felt the stirrings of an invigoration that went beyond anything he'd ever experienced before.

Admittedly, the effects of a Yellow Sun on Kryptonian Physiology was fairly well documented. It was also just incredibly classified. Most Kryptonians did not know that they could gain phenomenal, god-like power under the effects of a Yellow Sun, because most Kryptonians were never allowed to leave their planet or reach beyond their station in the first place.

The only reason Myk-Zod knew what a Yellow Sun could do for a Kryptonian was, once again, because Allura had provided him with access to restricted information. In all fairness, it was information he'd felt he needed. If he was going to be traveling the multiverse, he wanted to know exactly what to expect and what to watch out for as a Kryptonian so, so very far from home.

Funnily enough, most of a Kryptonian's weaknesses... were on Krypton itself. The Red Sun kept them from becoming gods, and certain crystalline minerals on the planet were incredibly poisonous to them. A Kryptonian empowered by a Yellow Sun, on the other hand, rapidly became strong enough that most of the extraterrestrial things that Krypton's Science Council had known about... simply wouldn't have much effect.

That didn't mean he was safe however. Far from it. While the Yellow Sun was steadily empowering him the more time he spent under its rays, it was also giving him away. He wasn't as tired as he should be... in fact, he wasn't tired at all. He felt healthier, more active, and more energized than he ever had in his entire life... and Myk-Zod knew that feeling would only grow the more and more he existed on this world.

... A bit of power wouldn't hurt too much. However, it did make him suspicious with the locals.

And so Myk-Zod isn't all that surprised when the startlingly attractive human woman Steve had introduced as 'Agent Peggy Carter' corners him after Bucky has finally received the medicine he needs and all but passed out from the strain his body has been under.

"So. Mike was it?"

Staring back at her as evenly as he can, Myk-Zod hums.

"That is correct."

"Have a last name to go with it, Mike?"

... Well, put on the spot like that, he defaults to the truth.

"Zod."

Questionable? Almost certainly. But he does his best not to give anything away, even as Peggy gives him a curious look.

"Mike Zod, huh?"

Well...

"Michael Zod, to be exact."

That was the proper name Bucky had given him, after all. Might as well make use of it as long as he was going to be pretending to be human. Peggy though, looks somewhat unimpressed.

"Wouldn't it be Mikkel Zod? You know... since you're supposed to be Danish?"

Hm. He feels like he's unfortunately misstepped. In the end, he just shrugs... better to stay silent rather than incriminate himself further, he figures. Of course, Peggy Carter's eyes narrow at this, her startlingly red lips pursing thin. After a long stretched out moment of silence, she leans in.

“Look... cards on the table. It’s obvious that Captain Rogers and Sergeant Barnes are protecting you for whatever reason. But none of you three seem to be much for Spy Craft. If it’s obvious to me that you aren’t who you say you are, it’s going to be obvious to others as well... people who don’t have as much faith in Captain Rogers as I do.”

Myk-Zod blinks slowly, taking this in even as Peggy continues.

“If Steve trusts you, I’m willing to trust you too. But I need to know what’s going on if I’m going to be able to cover for you with the relevant parties. Please, just be honest with me.”

For a brief moment, he’s reminded of Allura. She always had a way with words too. But this Agent Carter... he got the impression that she was even better with words than Allura had been. What was it she’d said? ‘Spy Craft’... no, Myk-Zod didn’t have much experience with such things despite all of the illegal activities he’d been getting up to back on Krypton. He merely kept his head down and relied on Allura to cover for him... and it had all just worked out.

Maybe Peggy was right. Her and Steve DID seem rather close. The only issue was... well, why hadn’t she confronted him and Steve Rogers together? Why had she waited until she got him alone to have this talk?

Myk-Zod couldn’t help but feel like he was being manipulated here. The only question was, did Peggy Carter truly have his best interests at heart? Because if she did, then being manipulated into telling her the truth might not be the worst thing imaginable. She could help them sell the lie of his origins better than he, Bucky, or Steve could.

However, if she wasn’t trustworthy, if she was probing for weakness with malicious intent... he would effectively be handing his secret over on a silver platter to the very type of person that Bucky had been trying to protect him from in the first place.

**-x-X-x-**

**A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!**