

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

A/N: Peggy makes the right choice.

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For a long moment, Peggy stands there considering it, every inch of her body strumming with tension. And then... her shoulders slump. No, it wouldn't be worth it. More than that, she doubted it would even work. Mike hadn't shown that sort of interest in her anyways, and from what she'd heard around the base, he wasn't shy with the women.

To be fair, at a time like this everyone needed their way of unwinding, so Peggy didn't begrudge him or the Private she'd heard he was spending his nights with their comfort. Still, it simply wasn't for her... especially not for something so underhanded. She would be lying if she said she'd never done anything underhanded in the past, but that was to the enemy... not to a friend.

Besides... they were winning anyways. Peggy had to believe that. The Allied Forces had the Axis Powers on the ropes, pushing them back mile by mile month after month. Meanwhile, the SSR was doing its part to hunt down Hydra and send them running wherever they could. While it was unfortunate that Arnim Zola hadn't been on that train where they nearly lost Bucky, it was still full of equipment and supplies and lesser scientists, all of whom had been captured and taken prisoner.

Both Hydra and Nazi Germany's days were numbered already. They didn't need Mike to step in on their behalf like they were children in the schoolyard. They could handle this on their own. They had to handle this on their own, because Mike was right... they couldn't come to rely on him, not in that way. And they couldn't let themselves be ruled by his power either. Not if they wanted democracy to continue to reign supreme.

Putting all thoughts of seducing the admittedly handsome alien fully out of her mind, Peggy instead focuses back on the moment, a fond smile spreading

across her face as she observes the emotional, heartwarming moment taking place between Steve, Bucky, and the rest of the Howling Commandos.

Today was a victory, no matter which way you cut it. A good man was still alive when by all rights he shouldn't be and the mission had otherwise been a complete success. Peggy takes some solace in that fact, even as she watches from the sidelines. Never one of the boys... but then, she didn't need to be.

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He keeps waiting for them to come for him but they never do. Not that it would have gone well for them if they had, but even still... he expects it. The betrayal. The attempt to capture him or neutralize him. He's really not sure whether or not he can trust Colonel Phillips, but Peggy had been right that hiding Bucky's recovery from the SSR Director was never going to go well.

And yet... as the days turn into weeks and the weeks turn into months, nothing of that sort happens. There's no ambush, no attempted arrest, and no further attempts to try and get him to turn his ungodly amount of power towards winning their war for them. Myk-Zod has to admit... he's pleasantly surprised by the morals of the humans he's tied him too, all things considered.

Sure, he fully believes that men like Steve and Bucky and women like Peggy were personally good, upstanding people. But he also knew the power of peer pressure and how easy it was to have your choices taken away from you by an all mighty superior.

If Chester Phillips had reported Myk-Zod's true nature to anyone further up the chain of command, then the Kryptonian doesn't doubt for a single second something would have happened by now. Every week that passes without said 'something' occurring just goes to show that the man has ultimately decided Myk-Zod is better left alone.

Which is good because obviously he had absolutely no desire to turn his strength onto the humans who had shown him such kindness since arriving in this world. But neither did he desire to turn his strength onto humans who he

didn't even know simply because they were on the other side of this conflict that they were all calling 'World War Two'.

Fuck, he couldn't even bring himself to kill the men who were trying to kidnap Bucky Barnes back there in the snow and Myk-Zod had had plenty of important, far more personal reasons to want *them* dead. So yeah, all in all... he wasn't a killer. And he didn't want to become one, especially not one who would murder thousands or more human beings to end their war.

That wasn't to say Myk-Zod wasn't still making himself useful in other ways, however. After Bucky's miraculous survival was explained to Howard Stark as a simple 'miscommunication' given Peggy had come and told them that Bucky was MIA, Myk-Zod and Howard had a bit of a competition to see who could design the best prosthetic replacement for the Sergeant.

... Suffice to say, Myk-Zod had won that little competition rather handily, though Howard had certainly done his best. Alas, the human man was limited in a number of ways, by his own intellect, by the limits of human knowledge, and by the technology of his time.

Howard Stark was smart, to be sure... but Myk-Zod wasn't sure he would call the man a genius. Clever? Yes. But he lacked a certain flexibility in his thinking to really push him over the edge into true greatness.

Still, Myk-Zod appreciated him all the same and even threw the man a bone by letting him help out with the prosthetic they eventually wound up making for Bucky after Bucky had ultimately picked Myk-Zod's prototype over Howard's.

The final piece was truly something Myk-Zod was proud of, a heavy duty arm that Bucky probably wouldn't have been able to use if he didn't clearly have an enhanced physicality from whatever experiments Arnim Zola had run on him.

But that was also something they were all keeping quiet on. Bucky's survival after falling all that way and losing a goddamn arm from the impact... well, it was pretty much impossible as far as human beings were concerned. And yet, he'd

survived anyways. Survived long enough for Myk-Zod to rescue him and to get him back to safety.

He'd still needed medical help and a full month to recover his strength, but that was nothing compared to what it should have been. Bucky wasn't entirely human anymore... in the same way Steve wasn't. The two of them were... beyond the human condition.

They needed it though, because their missions against Hydra were getting harder by the day. Each and every time they went out, they wound up busting open another Hydra Base or Depot, taking down the defenses and capturing whatever could be found there. However, each base was more defended and better armed than the last, with more and more of those blue energy weapons that Hydra seemed to have a monopoly on showing up by the week.

The only saving grace seemed to be that Hydra had completely broken away from the ruling government of their homeland. Their leader, Red Skull, had too big of an ego to continue to bow his red head to anyone else. As a result, those energy weapons were restricted only to Hydra, meaning that the average human being never even saw them.

That didn't mean much to Steve, Bucky, and the Howling Commandos though, who were seeing quite a LOT of those weapons on their missions. Still, they continued to come out on top... and most importantly, they continued to come out alive, mission after mission.

Everything seemed to be going pretty well. The only problem, really, was that they still hadn't found Arnim Zola or Myk-Zod's blood. Not a single Hydra Base had any of the samples that Zola had taken from him while he was in captivity. There weren't any experiments or even documentation on what had been done with it.

Myk-Zod wasn't so foolish as to think the blood had simply been misplaced or all used up or destroyed or anything like that. He wasn't going to rely on the hope that Arnim Zola hadn't been able to do anything with it and had given up somewhere along the way. No, his blood was still out there somewhere and the

longer that went on without them finding it, the more worried Myk-Zod found himself becoming over what the Hydra Scientist might have managed to do.

Until finally... a breakthrough. One day, on a visit to Private Lorraine, Myk-Zod found the young woman sitting on her bed staring at a small piece of paper with watery eyes. Upon his arrival, she looks up at him stricken and holds up the piece of paper.

“This... t-this is Raven’s handwriting. I don’t know how it got here but it was waiting for me on my p-pillow.”

Immediately, Myk-Zod is across the room, hand out as he wordlessly asks for the note. Lorraine hands it over without a fuss, looking concerned. To be fair, he’s concerned as well. Mystique has been doing a lot of work for them in the time since she left, but she’s usually found a way to get her messages to the people at the top directly... she’s never involved Lorraine or him like this before.

In this case though, he quickly understands why it involved them. The message tells Lorraine to pass it on to him, which... fair. From there, it’s two sets of coordinates. One of which is labeled as ‘Final Hydra Stronghold’ and the second is labeled ‘Zola Lab’. Myk-Zod’s jaw clenches at the words written at the bottom of the paper.

Come quick.

Two simple words... and yet, he can’t help but feel a sense of foreboding all the same.

“I-I don’t understand... did you know Raven was alright? Did you know what she was doing all this time?”

Myk-Zod grimaces at Lorraine’s distraught tone. He hadn’t liked lying to her all this time... and maybe he should have at least broken off their physical intimacy given he couldn’t tell her the truth. But now...

“I’m sorry. I knew she decided to leave of her own volition, but her secrets weren’t mine to tell. They still aren’t. What I can tell you is that what she’s doing now, at high risk to herself... it is important. Very important.”

So important that he should probably already be relaying Mystique’s latest message to the others. They all needed to know what was going on as soon as possible, but he also felt an obligation to make sure Lorraine was alright. The poor woman had been through a lot and had plenty of sleepless nights over wondering what happened to her friend.

... But at the same time, Lorraine wouldn’t be here right now in this base if all she could think about was herself. After a long moment, the blonde collects herself and slowly nods.

“I... I understand. I suppose... you should probably do something about that, huh?”

She wipes the water from the corners of her eyes before it can fully coalesce into tears and gives him a wobbly smile.

“It sounds like... it sounds like Raven might be in trouble too. If the ‘come quick’ is any indication. So... I guess you’d better get going.”

Myk-Zod lets out a low breath at that. Funny to think that his first impression of Lorraine had been so poor given her interaction with Steve Rogers. But in the end, she was a lot more than just that first impression had implied. She was a person with her own thoughts and feelings... and she was even capable of putting those aside for the greater good.

“You’re a good woman, Lorraine. A better woman than the likes of me deserve. Thank you... for everything.”

She manages a nod at that, not saying another word as Myk-Zod finally departs. Luckily they’re between missions so he’s able to get everyone important together fast enough. Soon he’s in a room with Steve, Bucky, Peggy, Colonel

Phillips, and Howard, all of them eyeing the note he's presented as well as a map.

"Should have known you knew something about all of those tips we were constantly getting."

That's all Colonel Phillips says about it before focusing on the matter at hand.

"The rumors say that Hydra's final stronghold is filled to the brim with massively destructive bombs they've been building for months now. They're planning to use them all over the world from what we've been able to find out. The only problem is, we didn't know where they were... until now."

Straightening up, Steve snaps off a salute.

"We'll start getting ready to depart as soon as possible, sir. If they do have bombs like that... we won't let those planes launch."

Colonel Phillips nods in response.

"See that you don't, son. Go and get your men prepared, both of you."

With that, Steve and Bucky depart to do precisely that. Myk-Zod, meanwhile, is staring at another part of the map... the second set of coordinates that Mystique's note had provided.

"I'll be leaving as well."

His words cause a ripple through the remaining people in the room. Howard looks confused but the Colonel and Peggy... less so.

"The one who got us this information... she's trapped behind enemy lines and I very much expect I'll find her here, at the second location. As well as Zola... and whatever he's been doing with my blood all this time."

Howard makes a curious noise in the back of his throat.

“Hang on, what? Your blood?”

But Myk-Zod ignores him, focused more on the Colonel and to a lesser extent Peggy. Colonel Phillips eyes him for a long moment before grunting.

“Can’t spare any resources to raid a lab right now. Not when shutting down the main base is so important. You’d be going alone.”

Myk-Zod nods, having expected as much. He smiles crookedly.

“You already know I work better solo anyways.”

That draws a derisive snort from the Colonel, though not a smile.

“Suppose I do. Fine then. Good luck, Doctor.”

Howard clears his throat.

“Now hang on just a second... Mike, you’re certainly a big guy, but you’re no soldier. This sounds like you’re rushing off to go solo behind enemy lines. That’s a bad idea, don’t you think?”

Myk-Zod can’t help but be a little touched by Howard’s concern. The two of them weren’t friends... they were closer to rivals than anything. Even if said rivalry was incredibly one-sided and all in Howard’s mind. Still, for the other man to express worry over Myk-Zod’s plans... well, it was fairly meaningful.

“I appreciate your concern, Howard. But I’ll be fine. And more importantly... some things need doing.”

He glances to Peggy and gives her a nod.

“Agent Carter.”

She hesitates for a moment before nodding back.

“Doctor.”

With that, and ignoring Howard’s previous protests, Myk-Zod leaves. Those last two words on Mystique’s note continue to resound through his head.

Come quick.

... He can only hope he’s not too late.

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