

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

A/N: A peek into the mystery that is Mystique!

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Mystique wanted to trust him, really she did. Certainly, 'Myk-Zod' seemed on the level. He'd had every opportunity to use her misunderstanding of his origins against her, only to turn and tell her a story so outlandish that it could only be true.

She believed he really was an alien from another universe. She believed him when he said that he had no intentions of hurting her, and that he trusted the likes of Captain America and his friend as well as Agent Carter. She even believed him when he'd said he didn't actually want to sexually use her for her shapeshifting.

However... belief was not the same as trust. And Mystique, no matter how much she wanted to, could not allow herself to trust anyone again. Frankly, showing her true nature to the hunky alien had been a moment of weakness to begin with.

He'd been... frankly more than merely 'satisfying' in bed. The way he'd slotted himself seamlessly into her and Lorraine's dynamic, while also allowing Lorraine to explore her bisexuality had been... phenomenal. And his cock wasn't half bad either.

The stamina though, the strength he used... and it was so obvious he was holding back too. Sure, there had been a question of whether 'Michael Zod' was another experiment like Steve Rogers. But Mystique's investigation into both had shown no signs of such a thing. At first, Mystique had wondered if Captain Rogers was himself a mutant... but all it took were the right faces and the right words to learn that he'd been the one and only American subjected to a Super Soldier Serum that even now had died with its creator.

Meanwhile, Myk-Zod... was not. His strength had not come from a serum, his stamina was fully organic, and his frankly chiseled physique was beyond human. So yes, Mystique had allowed herself to be fooled in the heat of the moment, the heady daze of sex leaving her ready to make bad decisions as she'd exposed herself to him.

The fact that it hadn't turned out badly for her was more luck than anything else. And Mystique knew better to rely on luck... especially ever since Destiny died.

Irene Adler, or Destiny as she'd become to Mystique and Mystique alone, had been her guiding light for decades. They'd met in the latter years of the nineteenth century, the first time in her entire life that Mystique hadn't felt alone. She'd still been Raven Darkholme in truth back then, and Destiny had still been Irene.

Together... together they'd been wonderful. And every day without Destiny in her life felt like Mystique was crawling on her belly, dragging herself through shards of broken glass towards a future she couldn't bring herself to imagine.

The only thing really keeping her going at this point were some of Destiny's last words to her before her demise. Only in hindsight had Mystique realized that the other woman foresaw her own death, at least in part. She might have done some things to try and prevent it, but Mystique couldn't say for sure. All she knew was that looking back, it became exceedingly obvious that the other mutant knew she didn't have much longer.

She'd told Mystique to live though. She'd told her to keep going, to continue on without her no matter what happened. And... one of the last things she'd told her was that one day, Mystique would have an opportunity presented to her, an opportunity she should grab with both hands and refuse to let go.

The sad thing was, Mystique didn't know whether that was truth or lie. She didn't know if Destiny was lying through her teeth and spouting vague bullshit to keep Mystique going at all costs, or if she was actually serious. They were her some of her last words though, so of course Mystique had to take them seriously.

She'd been on the lookout, even as these past few years had been exceedingly hard with Destiny's absence.

And now here she was. The world was at war for the second time in so many decades and she was in the thick of it, moving through Europe, slipping past security nets and between militarized lines thanks to her powers.

Private Raven Darkholme had been the longest time Mystique had stuck to one identity since Destiny's death, truth be told. She'd been too curious about Steve Rogers, too obsessed with finding out if he was one of their kind or not. What if he was? What if he was a mutant and the US military was turning him into their poster child?

That could have been the opportunity Destiny was talking about, Mystique had figured. She knew better now though. Captain Rogers was no mutant; he was a lab rat... a willing one at that. Admittedly, she'd lost most respect for him, learning that. It was a shame.

... But it wasn't all bad. Meeting Lorraine and Myk-Zod, Mystique decided, had made that self-imposed mission worth it.

However, it had been time to move on. And so here Mystique was, making her way deeper into Europe... deeper East, into German-held lands. Why? What was her purpose? Her goal? Well, without Destiny to guide her, without the love of her life to hold her hand and tell her what the future might hold... Mystique had to make her own purpose and goals these days.

Or at least develop one from what she was given. Myk-Zod's words from back in the bunker had... resonated with Mystique.

"I have a responsibility to make sure that blood is not used for nefarious purposes. So before I can depart, I must track it down and destroy it... as well as anything that has come of them having it."

She wanted to trust him. She *did* believe him. But... there was still a way to verify and confirm what he'd said, right? He might not be able to go and track

down what Hydra had taken from him while stuck working on a scientist on the backlines, but Mystique could do what he couldn't and track it down for him.

And sure, he probably had a plan of his own... she wouldn't interfere with it. She would just use her powers to hunt down Hydra's bases and get the information back to the Allies. What they did with that information afterwards... that was on them.

A small genuine smile spreads across Mystique's currently disguised face as she sits aboard one of the few passenger trains still running in Germany. It was nice to be doing something worthwhile again. Something... focused. She was certain that Destiny at the very least would approve of her going after this Hydra organization. Their evil was not something that could be denied, after all...

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"I suppose I just don't understand why Steve was the perfect candidate for the Super Soldier Serum. If the serum enhances what's already there, wouldn't a more robust physical specimen have been better?"

Howard Stark huffs.

"Ya know, I had that exact same conversation with Erskine when I found out his choice was the shrimp. You know what he told me?"

Myk-Zod simply raises a brow, gesturing for Howard to speak.

"He told me the mind was much more important than the body. Between the Vita Rays and the Serum, the body would be fine... but once you give that sort of power to the wrong guy, there's no real taking it back, is there? That's why Steve was the only guy for the job, in the end."

Hm. The Kryptonian could find very few faults with that logic, he supposed. Thinking about it from his own perspective, there were certainly plenty of people back on his planet that he would not necessarily want to have the power that he now wielded from having spent months on Earth under its Yellow Sun.

And from what he knew, the Hydra Leader he'd met, this 'Johann Schmidt', had been the dearly departed Dr. Erskine's first test subject... and there, the serum had turned him into a monster.

In that regard, it made sense for the Doctor, when given another chance to do things properly, to look for the most moral and upstanding candidate for the job. And don't get Myk-Zod wrong, Steve Rogers was certainly a good man with a big heart and a 'can-do' attitude, as the humans liked to say.

However...

"He might have been the only 'guy' for the job, but what about women?"

Howard blinks at that, finally fully looking up from the project he'd been working on. The two of them share a 'lab space' with one another, often working on their own things with just a dozen or so feet separating them. This has led to numerous spirited discussions over the intervening months such as this exact one.

A lot of the time, Myk-Zod finds himself having to feed Stark ideas about sciences that the human man has no clue even exist yet. The technology on this planet is woefully inadequate and Howard is not quite a genius by Kryptonian standards... however, he can be led to the answers if Myk-Zod is careful with it.

Sometimes anyways. Sometimes, the human scientist will dig his heels in and act like what Myk-Zod is saying is completely impossible and utterly ridiculous. Even when all he's saying are things that have been proven as scientific facts for thousands of years back in Krypton.

Alas, this is not Krypton... and most of the time, Myk-Zod cannot prove that he's right simply because the humans do not have the technology necessary for it.

This time though... Howard gives him a strange look, blinking rapidly.

"Women? What about women?"

Arching a brow right back, Myk-Zod makes a noise in the back of his throat.

“For instance, Agent Carter. Why was she not considered as a candidate for the serum? She’s stalwart, morally upstanding, and loyal. Was it because she wasn’t American, perhaps?”

He’d been learning about human factionalism over the last few months. It wasn’t nearly as simple as two sides facing off against one another, but then he’d sort of already guessed that. Still, finding out that Agent Carter was from an entirely different nation compared to most of the people Myk-Zod found himself surrounded by was... interesting.

Especially when the first nation had in fact been in the war for much longer, while the second nation, the United States of America, had joined late. And yet, the Super Soldier Project that Steve had been reborn from was apparently entirely American, even if Agent Carter had been involved with it from start to finish.

“What? No, that’s not it... uh, I mean... I’m sure the head honchos would have preferred an American over a Brit I guess, but Peggy is a dame. That’s why she wasn’t considered. It’s because she’s a woman that she wasn’t a candidate. Women aren’t meant for the battlefield. Hell, she might not have even survived the experience!”

Hm. Myk-Zod had suspected that was the line of thinking, but he still found it rather... disappointing. Not that Krypton was some paragon of gender equality either, but it still seemed leagues ahead of what Earth had going on, even its more... progressive nations. Someone like Allura had a seat on the Science Council after all, along with several other Kryptonian Women.

“You talk about her not surviving the experience... why would you believe that?”

“Well because women are delicate, of course!”

Myk-Zod makes a derisive noise in the back of his throat at that.

“And Steve wasn’t?”

Howard pauses, but the Kryptonian continues on.

“I have been told that Steve Rogers was malnourished, sickly, and small when he was recruited. And you said yourself that the body was far less important than the mind. So what made Steve better than Peggy? Putting the two candidates side by side, why did what lay between his legs make him a better candidate for the serum than her?”

Howard’s mouth opens and closes wordlessly for a moment and it’s clear he doesn’t really have an answer. Certainly from what Myk-Zod has witnessed, your average human man is stronger and more capable than your average human woman when it comes to the denizens of Earth.

But that’s not what they’re discussing here, now is it? No, what they’re discussing right now is two specific people, Steve Rogers and Peggy Carter. And by all metrics, if Steve’s physicality didn’t disqualify him from being a candidate, then Peggy’s should not have either.

“... It goes back to being a mind thing, I guess. Women just don’t have the mind for war, they-!”

“Oh? Is that right, Mister Stark?”

Myk-Zod can’t help but grin even as Howard blanches. The very woman they’ve been discussing strides into the room with a steely look in her eye and pursed lips as her heels click against the stone floor every step of the way.

Plastering a smile on his face, Howard immediately starts trying to run damage control.

“It’s not what it looks like, Peggy! We were just-!”

Myk-Zod, deciding to be ever so ‘helpful’, cuts in there.

“We were discussing the criteria for who should receive the Super Soldier Serum next, assuming it can be recreated. I thought you might make for a good candidate, Agent Carter.”

Howard scowls at him, but Myk-Zod only has eyes for Peggy... because even as he's talking, he can tell that something is wrong. While she does straighten up a fraction of an inch at his words, she doesn't allow herself to get drawn into the conversation at hand. Instead, she delivers the bad news in a clipped tone.

“I find myself uninterested in commenting on such hypotheticals right now. The Howling Commandos have returned from their latest mission. The train was where it was supposed to be and filled with supplies for Hydra as well as some scientists.”

Grimacing, Peggy looks away for a moment.

“... However. Arnim Zola was not onboard. And furthermore... we lost Sergeant Barnes.”

Howard chokes on his own spit, even as Myk-Zod goes still. He remembered hearing about the mission today... they were hoping to catch Schmidt's right hand man on this train after months of dealing with Hydra bases all across Europe. Myk-Zod was hoping for it too, truth be told, because he wanted to interrogate Zola on what had been done with his blood.

On the one hand, nothing had come up yet... there'd been no signs of experiments that spoke of human tampering with Kryptonian Blood. Myk-Zod took this to mean that they hadn't been able to crack it yet... and given the level of technology on this planet, he suspected they wouldn't be able to for quite a few decades more.

On the other hand, the silence had been nerve-wracking all these months. What was Zola doing? Where was he hiding? What had been done, even if it had failed so far?

And now... hearing Peggy say that Bucky was lost... Myk-Zod feels a tremor go through his body. He... doesn't think he can stay back any longer.

"What happened to Sergeant Barnes, exactly?"

When Peggy tells him that Bucky isn't confirmed dead, but merely presumed dead... Myk-Zod lets out a breath he didn't know he was holding. And he decides then and there that he's going to do something about this.

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