



## xxxviii. Sam's House

It was morning when three battered and exhausted Shield Agents and Avengers arrived at a small house right outside of DC. They were all bruised, in various states of disarray, in need of food and a shower, and very on guard. But Steve and Auralie both trusted this man, and Natasha had no better ideas, so there they were.

Steve knocked on Sam's door. Sam opened it, looking surprised.

"Everyone we know is trying to kill us," Natasha said.

Sam looked over the weary heroes and sighed, knowing he couldn't turn them away. He could never do that to these desperate people who needed so much help. They were such a mess, and he just had to say, "not everyone."

Auralie beamed. Sam was a greater hero than pretty much everyone in Shield, and he was able to be that awesome at 7:00 in the morning, while still in his pajamas.

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Sam was kind and let them all take showers. Once they were all finished and Steve was in the bathroom getting dressed, Auralie and Natasha sat on the bed in the guest bedroom, Natasha playing with her hair. Neither girl spoke, because so much had happened. They just needed quiet.

Though, a comforting friend was good too. Steve stood in the doorway and said, "hey."

They both looked at him, and he came over. Auralie moved so he could sit across from Natasha. She had a feeling the assassin needed more reassurance than her.

Steve didn't have to ask, Natasha just started talking, "I used to think when I joined Shield I was going straight. But it turns out I just traded in the KGB for Hydra."

Steve and Auralie exchanged looks. Auralie said, "Natasha, you did turn your life around. Maybe Hydra did take over Shield, but you had no way of knowing. And not everyone was bad. Steve and I aren't bad, Clint is about as far from bad as you can get, Coulson and Maria aren't bad. The people you've come to trust the most aren't bad. You have good judgment Nat. And you don't need to go straight. I'm as far from straight as you can get, and I'm a freaking superhuman." ❧

They both gave her looks that she took to mean, "seriously." Auralie laughed, "alright, alright, sorry I had to. Puns and jokes are keeping me sane in the middle of this crazy world." ❧

Natasha looked at them, the amusement fading from her face, "If it was up to me to save your life, and be honest here, would you trust me to do it?"

"I would now," Steve smiled gently, "and I'm always honest."

Auralie nodded, "I would too Natasha. I've trusted you for years now, that's not changing."

"Sorry you got dragged into this Ali," Natasha sighed.

Auralie shrugged, "not the craziest moment in my life."

"Are you alright Ali," Steve asked.

"Yeah," Auralie sighed, "there's just a lot going on, and I'm worried about Maria, and Shield, and what's going to happen with things like Loki's scepter now that Hydra has it."

"Damn, Hydra does have the scepter," Steve realized, "well this day keeps getting better and better."

Natasha grinned, "well, you seem pretty chipper for someone who realized he died for nothing."

"He is more fun to be around than most corpses," Auralie laughed. Steve rolled his eyes at his friends, but in a fond way. He was glad to have them with him.

Sam poked his head into the room, "I made breakfast. If you guys, you know, eat that sort of thing."

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Auralie scarfed down pancakes. She hadn't realized how hungry she was until Sam, who she was convinced was one of the most amazing people in the world, had offered them to her. Now there was sticky sweet syrup on her face, and crumbs spilling from her mouth, and the world seemed a whole lot brighter. ❧

"So this information was on the Lumerian Star?" Sam asked, making sure he had all the facts correct once they finished explaining it to him.

"Yeah," Steve said, "and so was Jasper Sitwell."

Natasha, Sam, and Auralie all realized what he was implying. Sitwell was a higher ranking officer, and most likely a part of Hydra.

"So, the question is, how do the three most wanted people in Washington kidnap a Shield officer in broad daylight?" Natasha summarized.

Auralie pondered over that as well.

Sam placed a file in front of Steve and Natasha, "the answer is, you don't,"

Steve picked up the file, "what's this?"

"Call it a resume," Sam said.

Steve looked it over, "I thought you said you were a pilot."

"Oh, I never said pilot," Sam grinned. Auralie had put down the food, cleaned her face, and come over. She looked at the files.

Auralie beamed at Sam, "and I thought you were cool before. Damn Sam, you're even more badass in my mind."

"Thanks, kid," he replied.

Steve shook his head, "I can't ask you to do this. You got out for a good reason."

"Dude," Sam protested, "Captain America needs my help. There's no better reason to get back in."

Steve nodded, conceding, "alright. Where can we get one of these?"

"The last one is behind heavily guarded impenetrable doors, in a corner of Fort Mead," Sam said.

Steve looked at Nat, who shrugged, "shouldn't be a problem."

Auralie found herself grinning at this stroke of good luck that went by the name of Sam Wilson. Not only did he have the heart of a superhero, but he also had the costume. She could see it now, Sam Wilson, the Falcon. ❧

**A/N: I've made so much progress on this story this weekend, I'm so pleased with myself. Also, Sam Wilson is amazing and one of my favorites. Just wanted to say that.** ❧

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