



## xxx. Multitasking

Auralie, Steve, and Natasha were a part of a Shield strike team that was meant to deal with threats to the intelligence agency and the free world. They and the rest of the team, including Brock Rumlow, the Shield agent that Auralie didn't like, for some instinctive reason, were gathered around. Rumlow explained the hostage situation to them, and as he finished, Auralie and Natasha began strapping on their parachutes.

Natasha asked Steve, "what are you doing this weekend?" Auralie perked up. She and Maria had both taken note of the flirtatious relationship between the soldier and the spy. There might have even been some bets with Amanda and some other agents on if they'd get together.

Steve rolled his eyes, "well all the guys from my barbershop quartet are dead, so....."

"You know, if you asked Lauren out from statistics, she'd probably say yes," Natasha called. She had made it her goal to get Steve a date. Auralie wondered when she would get it in her head that Steve wasn't going to ask anyone out, he would have to be the one getting asked out.

"I don't ask," Steve replied, summing up Auralie's thought.

"Too shy or too scared?" Natasha laughed.

"Too busy," Steve called and jumped out of the plane.

"Was he wearing a parachute," one of the newer agents asked.

Rumlow chuckled, "Nope."

Auralie looked at Natasha, "you know if you want to get Steve out of his apartment and into the world on dates, just ask him out yourself."

"Nah, I'm just teasing him. I'm not actually gonna force him into dating anyone, I just like annoying him."

Auralie rolled her eyes and the two women jumped out of the plane, activating their parachutes. Rumlow and the others followed them. They landed beside Steve and Natasha called, "oh, what about the nurse who lives across the hall from you?"

"Secure the engine room, then find me a date," Steve called.

"I'm multitasking," Nat replied.

Natasha and Auralie headed for the engine room. Auralie used her light powers to shoot out the cameras, and Natasha kicked the asses of several of the enemy pirates. One idiot had his back turned the whole time, and when he finally spun around, there was Natasha who grinned and said, "hey sailor." She then smacked him with a crowbar and walked away like a badass.

Auralie, who had followed, rolled her eyes at her friend, who was being a little dramatic. But it got the job done, so she wasn't complaining. Soon the two of them had the engine room under their control. Rumlow and several of the others were ready to free the hostages, and Steve was fighting Batroc the Leaper. Auralie marveled at the stupidity of the pirate's name when she heard Steve calling for Natasha to go assist Rumlow with the freeing of the hostages. But Natasha wasn't listening to the Captain.

Auralie was about to call out to her and ask what the hell she was doing when something exploded and Steve went flying through the wall. He got to his feet and looked around. Auralie waved, not quite sure what was going on, but his gaze was fixed on Natasha.

"What are you doing?" he asked, coming to peer over her shoulder, then realizing exactly what she was doing, "your saving Shield information. But the mission was to rescue hostages."

"No, that's your mission," Natasha replied. Auralie realized what was going on. Fury had assigned Natasha an alternative assignment without telling anyone. She felt anger bubbling up inside of her, and she wondered why Fury would have done that. Did he not remember all the chaos his keeping secrets about the Tesseract sparked?

Steve grabbed Natasha's arm, trying to continue his conversation, but then they heard the click of another bomb. Auralie ran for it, her flight instinct kicking in and ducked out the door. Steve and Natasha came running after her. Natasha lept over to Steve and he caught her around the waist. She wrapped his legs around him and they jumped out the door just as the explosion rattled the ship. Natasha was blasted over to Auralie, and the two sat next to each other, panting. Steve was a little ways away. All three were a bit bruised and battered, but none the worse for wear.

"Ok," Natasha admitted, "that one was on me."

They made their way to the others. Fortunately, Rumlow had managed to free the hostages without help, though Steve was still frustrated with Natasha and chewed her out for her actions. Auralie walked among the hostages, making sure they were all ok, that no one was injured. The last thing they needed was for Fury's secret-keeping to get someone else hurt.

The plane dropped a ladder for extraction, and they all climbed up, planning to send out a warning to authorities about the pirates. They would have arrested Batroc themselves, but they had to get the liberated agents and technicians to safety.

Natasha had gone to give directions to the pilot and the team. Rumlow had already started writing a debriefing. Auralie was sitting in the corner, texting Maria about the mission and reading The Red Pyramid by an orb of warm yellow light that she held in the palm of her hand. The others were talking happily, but Auralie was not a big fan of large groups of people. Sure she was friendly with her fellow agents, but she was fairly introverted, and she tended to only enjoy talking with her fellow Avengers, Maria, and a few others like her friend Amanda.

Steve came over to sit beside her and she put the book down, knowing he meant business. The Captain asked, "Ali, did you know about Nat's other mission?"

"No," the 18-year-old replied, "if I did, I would have told you."

"I thought so," Steve nodded, "you've never been a fan of all the lies and trickery."

"Yeah. I know how important lying is to our job, and I don't mind doing it, I'm not bad at lying during interrogation and that sort of thing. But I hate lying to my friends. A team should know that everyone has each other's backs," Auralie explained.

Steve nodded, "my thoughts exactly. Tonight I'm going home to rest and I think you should do the same. But tomorrow I'm going to talk to Fury, and I was wondering if you wanted to come with me."

"Sure," Auralie replied, "we'll be able to finally get some answers."

**A/N: Just a warning, there will definitely be little Romanogers moments scattered throughout the book. I like the ship too much to not include them. But it shouldn't be too much so even if you don't ship Romanogers it doesn't make a difference about your enjoyment of the book.**

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