



xxxi. Compartmentalization

The next day, Steve and Auralie marched purposefully into Fury's office. They wanted answers and they weren't leaving until they got them.

"Yes Captain, Agent Shadow, what do you want?" Fury asked as they came in.

Steve stormed over to Fury's desk, "I can't lead missions if the people I'm leading have missions of their own."

"I didn't know if you'd be comfortable with it," Fury replied, "Agent Romano is comfortable with everything."

"One, that's not true, and two, why didn't you tell us?" Auralie cried.

"It's called compartmentalization. If no one knows everything that's going on, they can't reveal it all," Fury answered.

Steve protested, "but it also divides us. How can we trust each other if we don't know what's going on."

"The last time I trusted someone, I lost an eye," Fury scowled.

Auralie protested, "Director please, we can't work like this."

Fury got to his feet, "alright, come on you two, I want to show you something."

The three of them got into an elevator, and Fury said, "take us to level B2."

"Captain Rogers and Agent Shadow don't have clearance," the Shield interface system said.

"Override, Fury, Nicholas J." Fury told the system, which started the elevator and began taking them down.

They stood in silence for a moment, then Steve broke the ice by commenting, "they used to play music you know."

"Yeah, I know," Fury laughed, "my grandfather operated one of these things for thirty years." Auralie listened attentively. Very rarely did Fury open up about his past, and when he did, there was usually reasoning behind it.

"My granddad worked in a nice building, got good tips. He walked home every night, bunch of ones in a lunch bag, he'd say hi to people, they'd say hi back. Over time, the neighborhood got rougher. He'd say hi, people'd say keep on stepping. Granddad got to gripping that lunch bag a little tighter," Fury told them.

"Did he ever get mugged?" Steve asked.

"Every week someone would come up and ask what's in the bag. And he showed them. A roll of crumpled up ones and a loaded 22 magnum," Fury answered, "yeah, my Granddad loved people, but he didn't trust him."

The elevator doors opened, revealing helicarriers, but not the normal helicarriers, new and improved ones, that were almost completed. They were big and fearsome, and Auralie had never seen anything like them before. She wasn't sure what they were for, but something about them sent shivers up her spine.

"Yeah," Fury chuckled at the sight of their stunned faces, "this is a little bigger than a 22."

They made their way to the bridge where they could overlook the helicarriers. Fury looked out over the construction, proudly, and turned to his employees, "these helicarriers are called project insight, a new global peacekeeping program. After New York, we realized we needed a more efficient way to deal with threats, so we created these."

"Did Stark help?" Steve asked.

"He provided a bit of input," Fury answered, "he was able to help after getting an up and close look at our engines." Auralie smiled a bit at the memory. It was one of the first times she, Steve, and Tony had ever worked together.

"What do they do?" Auralie questioned, still unsure of how more helicarriers would help.

Fury answered, "they're weaponized. If they detect a threat, they can wipe it out before that threat even comes to be."

"What?" Auralie gasped, not sure if she was understanding.

Steve also had his doubts, "nothing good ever came from trying to start a war before it happens."

"We are going to neutralize so many threats before they even happen," Fury exclaimed.

"By holding a gun to everyone on Earth and calling it protection," Steve concluded.

Auralie cried, "you can't do that. This is, this is just wrong."

Fury glared at them, "do you two have any idea what you people, supposedly the best among us, have done?"

"Yeah," Steve scowled, "we compromised, sometimes in ways that made it a little hard to sleep at night, but we did it so people could be free. This isn't freedom, this is fear."

"Captain, I am trying to save lives," Fury defended himself, "now, if you two have a problem with the method, you don't have to stick around here."

"Maybe I won't," Steve fired back, heading towards the elevator.

Auralie turned to Fury, "sir, I know you want to save people, and I respect that. But this is a horrible idea. At least delay it. I have a bad feeling, about a lot of things, including Brock Rumlow and the pirate attack last night. Please sir, at least try and figure that out before attempting to launch this crazy scheme."

He thought for a moment, then nodded, "alright Agent Shadow. Your feelings are usually reliable. I'll ask for a delay from the World Security Council and Pierce, and investigate the pirates. You aren't the only one who has a bad feeling about everything that's going on. And if both of us are worrying about it, it's worth checking out."

"Thank you sir," Auralie breathed a sigh of relief.

Fury sighed, "hopefully, probably, this is nothing. But if it is something, you aren't the only one who will be glad those helicarriers aren't operational."

"Yeah," Auralie agreed, "what about Rumlow?"

"I'll keep an eye on him," Fury promised. They made their way towards the elevator.

Auralie said, "sir, I'll talk to Captain Rogers and see if he's made up his mind about Shield. I'm just gonna give him a day or two to think about it and see if he's come to a conclusion."

"Thank you Agent Shadow," Fury replied.

Auralie made her way back to her room at Shield, which felt very lonely without Maria in the adjoining room. She sighed and picked up a book, not sure how to feel about her conversation with Steve and Fury. She was reassured that Fury was also suspicious about the attack, and knew he would make sure everything was properly investigated. But she was also frightful of the helicarriers and the era of darkness they would signal if they were launched.

Taking a deep breath, she banished those thoughts to the back of her mind. She would worry tomorrow, now it was time to read.

A/N: I have fantastic news. This book has reached 1k reads! I feel so proud of myself. Thank you all so much!

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