

The Shield in the Stone

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The Shield in the Stone

by [RoseMcoolFan](#)

Summary

Steve Rogers pulled the Shield out of the Stone and in turn, pulled the world into a new marvelous age.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Have Patience, A Quick Wit, And A Gentle Heart](#) by [ironfamjam](#)

Beginning

In all her years of life, all the empires she has seen rise and fall- The Ancient One had never seen so much corruption in one Kingdom

There's absolutely no one you can trust, Nobles and Leaders have all forgotten their duties for selfish wants, and the people starving to death on the side of the road are completely ignored and shunned.

What was once a respected Kingdom has fallen so low they are as worthless as the leaves people trample on their way to the market. The Ancient One did her best to lead people on the paths to happiness. She searched through the different timelines searching for ways to bring this Kingdom off its knees. To stand proud as it once did! As it once did when the Kings and Queens heeded her warnings about droughts and devastation. Warnings about those who were wicked with vile intentions. With her warnings ignored, evil soon crept up in the kingdom. And look where they are now.

Something in The Ancient One wanted to abandon them. She hated herself for it but she could not help her angry feelings over being ignored. The thoughts in her mind came so easily that she could be smug-that she was right and deserved to feel so!

But then she remembers the youth. She remembers when a mother would calm her daughter and a father would help his son. She remembers how they would look at her, when she used her power for little, miniscule things; like stopping a small boy's picture, that he made for his mother, from falling in the mud.

After all he worked so hard for it.

She kept them in her mind as she used her most powerful tool. The amulet. A strong force older than she was. A magic she was trained to use and control and above all else- be used for good.

And helping these people with kind hearts?

That was good.

So she looked. And looked. And alas she looked! She strained the Amulets power to its limits and she strained her mind. Her efforts were fruitless. Everyday more riots turned violent and people fought with each other over minimal things. There was more bloodshed. There was more tears over lost family members. More knives plunged into the backs of their friends and breaking their oaths to the people and to the king. The Ancient One started to grow doubtful. She was considering doing the one thing she had never done in her long life.

Give up.

Then one day, The Ancient one found a timeline truly... remarkable. So unusual and unique... could it actually work? I-It was fantastical! Magical! Amazing! She followed the

line farther. Searching to see what had happened that caused this to be possible. What had made this day of searching different from the long, tired, useless days before. What had made this day worth it.

She was 26 years in the future when she saw it.

She saw someone who understood what freedom is. She understood why today was so different.

Because today... Steve Rogers was born.

“You’re going to get caught if you keep doing that.” Chester Philips said. He took a sip from his glass. They had gone out to lunch that day.

“Doing what?” Dr. Abraham Erskine said innocently to his dear friend. An old army general, Mr Philips was. He’s not really what you would call old yet, but with all the corruption it was dangerous to keep holding his position in the kingdom.

“You know what.”

“I’m afraid that with all my magic I can’t read your mind.” Dr Erskine teased in his thick accent.

It was a quiet day, one of which Erskine would never take for granted. A quiet day without any mobs or fires was guaranteed to be a good day. The sky was blue and not tainted with smoke, the grass was green not trampled men fighting over a copper coin, and the shops were open with their windows repaired from the previous cruelty from thieves. Instead Dr. Erskine would take advantage of this and leave his house in the woods to see Chester philips.

Sneakily, Dr. Erskine twirled his fingers underneath his blue robe that only barely passed for normal. Immediately he made a flower bloom in a vibrant pink across the street at the old run down Dress Shop. A bit of color was already doing quite well to better the appearance- To make it stand out.

You see, that was another advantage of a quiet day... everyone is busy listening to the silence that they don’t always catch the magic happening beside them.

Magic was a practice Dr. Erskine is quite fluent in. He had taken lessons from The Ancient One and became one of the few people in this world with the gift.

A gift, sadly, people think they should take.

Society seemed to grow to hate magic. People hear squirrels outside and come up with ridiculous fantasies how The Ancient One is the reason the Old King fell. How she abandoned them all and hated humans. Bah! Although untrue it didn’t stop the people’s fear and the awful witch burnings in the square, accusations flying left and right, it didn’t even make sense because for one Dr. Erskine is a sorcerer.

“Oh I’m serious. Someone sees you waving your fingers about, they’re going to try and throw you in jail.” Chester said.

“I don’t believe magic is against the law.”

“Like people care about the law anymore.”

He had a point. Dr. Erskine stopped his fun and looked at Chester Seriously. A beat passed.

“It won’t be like this forever.”

“Your magic amulet prophecies tell you that?” Dr. Erskine didn’t take offense to the slight mock in his voice.

“No. I just have Faith.” The Sorcerer said

“I always suspected you were crazy.” Chester said. “Now I know.” Dr. Erskine smiled.

“Well a little crazy is good, no?”

“We’ll see- What in Katepano is that?”

Out of the corner of his eye, Dr. Erskine saw the familiar orange sparks circling in the air in the middle of the square. That could only mean one thing. But this thing could either be very good,

Or very, very, bad.

His fears were dashed away as he saw the smile of his mentor and friend walk through the ring. Her yellow robes trailing behind her as she tread forwards.

“Hello Abraham.” The Ancient One said “It’s good to see you. It’s been too long and -are those grey hairs?” she teased.

“At least I have hair.” He shot right back. She feigned offence.

Dr Erskine turned a little more serious. “Has-Has something happened? In the timelines?”

“Something has-”

“Excuse me what in all of Thaumazo is happening?” Oh yes that’s right. Chester.

The Ancient One spoke first. “I’m afraid you two are going to have to schedule this for another day. Which is a shame because it is a dreadfully beautiful day.” she said looking around at the peace- and also at the gasping Dress Shop Owner who saw the whole thing.

“I need your help Abraham.” She said. “If this future is going to work, we’re going to have to make sacrifices. Take risks.”

“You’re always taking risks. Even if you’re sitting on your bottom doing nothing -you’re simply risking your intelligence.”

The Sorceress smiled. “Hmm we should be off now.” Dr. Erskine followed her almost bumping into her when she stopped suddenly.

“Honestly Abraham, if you’re going to do one you might as well just do them all.” ah. She saw the flower. She raised her hands and orange runes floated above them in patterned shapes. The whole square transformed into a lush and green forest. Flowers dotting the windows of shops and the bushes and ferns turned healthy and plump.

“You always have to show me up, don’t you?” they left leaving Mr. Philips with a shocked face.

“That... is quite... the future...” Dr. Erskine breathed out.

“And that’s only the parts I can show you.” The Ancient one still smiled. In fact the smile seemed glued to her face by now.

“This future is very...”

“Extravagant? Mystical? Phenomenal?”

“I was just going to say ‘big’.”

“Will you help me?” a simple question. But the Ancient One did anything but simple.

Dr Erskine tapped his fingers on the table nervously. So many moving parts, so many things could go wrong. And from what she told him there was quite a bit of it that was out of their hands. All they could do was set up the pieces. He looked around the rather furnished cave. It has been almost 3 years since he had last been here and The Ancient one had gone into hiding from that Tyrant on the throne. He looked at the grand curtains and stone walls. If you didn’t know better you probably would have thought you were in a castle. Good thing Erskine knew better.

The Ancient one showed him the pieces of the Future that he was ‘allowed’ to know. He would have been offended if he didn’t know how delicate time was and understood that all information has a time and a place. He saw a few important figures in the future. Lady Peggy Carter and Sir Howard Stark.

When he asked The Ancient One why he didn’t know these people already he was quite astonished when he learned that all of this would take place 26 years in the future.

By then he might have to admit he’s old!

Erskine also saw some things concerning. The Ancient One wasn’t lying when she said they would have to sacrifice.

“What do you need?”

It was tax day. A bad day for almost everyone. Even the sheriffs and officers who went about to each house griped. No one knew what the actual price was. Greedy officers would make it up and pick fights with those who disagreed. No matter what the price was, it was always too high. If you had a bit of wealth you didn't keep it longer than a day. At night is when the thieves and rascals would come.

It was chaos.

A fight had broken out in the center of the entire kingdom. Two men were going at it, no one knew why or who had started it. It didn't really matter. More people got roped in and soon it was an all out brawl. In the midst of the confusion a small boy was separated from his mother and newly adopted baby. The boy was no more than 5. He and his mother had had quite a lot of emotional days. Just a few days ago, a family friend named Sarah had passed away after giving birth to her son. The father of the baby had died in an accident just a month before. The little boy's mother didn't hesitate to take the responsibility and raise Sarah's son along with her own.

But he couldn't find her. He only let go of her hand for a moment and immediately she was gone. The fight was escalating, things were starting to be thrown and the little boy wasn't very fast. His legs were still short! He hid behind a cart, trying to wait until it was safe again.

"Momma! Momma!" the little boy was crying now and nobody was stopping to comfort the poor child.

Suddenly the fighting stopped. Gasps and shouts rang out, people were pointing... pointing at something! slowly the boy got up from where he was hiding and turned around to see what had been his salvation.

It was so huge that even over all of the strong grown up men, the little boy could still see the gigantic stone platform, looking like it was crafted by royal workers. It looked at least 8 feet tall! The little boy saw a stone staircase magically appear leading up to the top of the pillar.

The little boy ran forward, his curiosity pulled him towards it like he was attached to a rope. It was then he saw the metal, red and blue, striped shield. The sun bounced off the metal giving it a radiant look. In the middle was white shining star.

That must be a shield fit for a king.

"What's it say?!" a young man said. The boy realized there were words on the side of the stone. He couldn't read though and was thankful when somebody shouted it out.

"“Whosoever can lift and be this shield...A shield for peace and a shield for the people...Shall be the next Great King of Katepano...And restore the Kingdom to its former glory!?”"

"The next king?!"

"What about the now King!?"

“Should we tell the Royals?”

“Of course not! They would have us hanged for treason!”

More people started to shout, everyone’s opinion being broadcast loud and clear. The little boy backed away, afraid that they would start fighting again.

“All Right, that’s enough!” a haughty man said, he had an open collared shirt exposing the rippling muscles and hairy chest. The man was tan, probably because of many hours working out in the sun and in the fields. The same man was walking up the stairs, a hop in his step. “Honestly I would expect peasants would know how to treat their next king!” he put his large hands on the shield and the uproar began again.

“Oh please!”

“Like John would ever be king!”

“Stop making a fool of yourself!”

The comments only seemed to spur the man, apparently named John, on.

“Well there’s only one way to find out!” he said and grabbed the harness of the shield. The audience held their breath as they watched the man grip the shield and finally gave a mighty tug.

The shield didn’t budge.

“W-What?” the man said. “What is this!?” the man tugged and pulled until he was red in the face and out of breath. The people laughed and laughed happy to see the egotistical man be put in his place. A few more men made their way up the stairs, hoping to give it a shot as well. The little boy watched with wide eyes as they all nearly cut their fingers and hands trying to get the shield to budge. They even tried to pull the shield together. Ten men tried with all their strength but it made no difference.

“Why won’t this blasted shield budge!?”

“I think it’s pretty obvious to me,” an older lady yelled haughtily and the crowd silenced to hear her, then she sang in a mocking voice. “You’re not worthy!” she laughed.

People yelled angry at her and there were those who agreed. The little boy just thought the tumultuous noise was starting to hurt his small head. He tugged at his ears.

“James!?” the little boy heard his mother call him. He turned to find his mother he seemed to have lost ages ago. “James Buchanan Barnes, where are you!?”

“Momma! Momma, I’m here!” The little boy spotted his mother and ran through the crowd to hug her tightly. She was looking very frazzled with her messy hair and splotchy eyes. She was holding his new little brother closely.

“Oh, I’m so glad you’re ok...” his mother said whilst hugging them both. “But if you ever run away from me again, so help me I will-!”

“Momma, what are they doing over there?” James pointed at the struggling men who seemed they were now considering attaching a rope to the shield.

“...I don’t know dear.” his mother said with an indescribable look in her eyes.

“I really don’t know.”

Swords and Shields

Chapter Summary

We finally get to meet our Beloved Steve Rogers in a time with Kings and Queens.

With Prophecies and destinies, all of which, must start somewhere.

Chapter Notes

...Hiiiiiii....

So it's been like a month, but here is a bigger chapter! YAY! This project has been doing me a lot of good with my mindset as a writer and really getting into the minds of the characters. So...

YAY!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

On the day that was going to change his life and the lives of everyone in the kingdom, Steve Rogers slept in.

Now, he didn't exactly mean to and honestly it was Bucky's fault for forcing him to help him practice all through the night ("Just one more time." "Bucky!" "Hey, look on the bright side, you might actually be better than a metal dummy!" "BUCKY!"), but that didn't stop the overwhelming terror when he realized it was almost already High-noon. Steve swung his legs over the small bed and his feet hit the ground with a small thud. Steve had to admit he was a bit smaller than most people. Heck he was smaller than most kids! He had a lot of breathing problems, things he was just born with that kept him from most jobs available to common folk.

Steve got ready as quickly as his legs could carry him. Which in Steve's case, wasn't very quick. Nevertheless he managed to gather his things and head out the door with seldom any time and it only came of the price of looking like he had been trampled.

He was so so late. So, so, *so* very late. Steve ran through the markets, panting and gasping, but didn't stop until he was at the big doors that lead to the even bigger arena. Bucky was waiting on the steps with an irritated face. Bucky had short spiky hair and a squarish jaw. His lips were pinched in a line.

"You're late." he said.

"I'm *dying*!" Steve said breathing hard with his hands on his knees.

Bucky rolled his eyes. "Alright, alright." Bucky started to help his brother make his way up the stairs. "You know you're not supposed to run like that." he reprimanded.

"I'm also not supposed to stay up to an unholy hour helping you practice swordplay." Steve shot back. He took a deep breath, only just starting to recover. "Oh gosh, I haven't run like that since 5 years ago when we ran from Ms. Harty-"

"-Oh I swear she never looked more like an angry cow than she did chasing after us!" Bucky said with a laugh.

"Well it was your fault!, 'No, Bucky, throwing an overripe tomato at the meanest old lady in the kingdom is a bad idea!'" Steve said laughing too.

They were supposed to enter the arena an hour before anyone else. That way they could set up without the problem of bustling crowds. But obviously that was now impossible. Bucky and Steve got the armor and weapons in a frenzy and chaos. Steve looked out in the stands. There were two floors. The top floor seats went to the nobles and occasionally royals, while the lower seats went to the common folk. It was a dome arena, meaning there would be people on every side of the stage. The stage is where Bucky would be fighting.

Bucky was competing in the Katepano swordplay tournament. It's held every 3 years and whoever wins goes back home with 100 gold pieces. A lot for people of Steve's and Bucky's stature. It's one of the bigger events in the Kingdom, really the only one that was still somewhat respected and it showed on the peoples faces. Steve thinks he saw more smiling faces right then than he ever had in his entire life.

However it wasn't all swell. It's very dangerous. All the judges are bribed and biased and more than half the competitors are cheaters using foul play and getting away with it. Steve despised those bullies, they got away with everything. Justice seemed to be a foreign idea to the minds of the people of Katepano.

Bucky had to win. Otherwise they weren't going to make it through this winter.

Bucky's mom, Winnifred.. she died this earlier year. It was a hard blow against the brothers, both in money and in spirit. Steve knew that Winnifred wasn't really his mother but she might as well have been. Raised him when his own mother, Sarah, passed away after giving birth to him. Steve owes her quite a lot.

Steve was sure that Bucky was going to win, he also knew that Bucky wasn't going to cheat either. Bucky wouldn't disgrace his mother who taught them both integrity, sometimes albeit very aggressively.

Winnifred was a powerful woman and an even more powerful Mother.

Steve finished cleaning the sword they were given. In order of being 'fair' the rules stated you had fight with a sword you were issued. Honestly, this just made it easier for the cheaters. Bucky had told him stories of swords that had things hidden inside them, different weights to throw off competitors, and even some that were dipped in poison. All of this was invisible to the nobles in the top barracks. The ones who opinions actually mattered.

A part of Steve didn't want Bucky to compete at all. A better part of Steve knew that he had too. Not only for the money but just that Bucky needed this. This was a chance. A chance to prove that hard work and skill could beat dishonesty and lies.

And all of Steve knew that Bucky had a lot of skill.

He also obviously knew by his sore back that Bucky was a hard worker.

Steve handed Bucky his sword. Bucky had gotten all of his armor on which in turn made him look a little bulkier and just a tad bit ridiculous. Bucky took the sword silently, it was a clear sign that Bucky was a bit, if not a lot, nervous.

“I checked it for any signs of foul play. As far as I can tell it looks good.” Steve told him.

Bucky brought the sword up to his eye level, eyeing it carefully. Then he said, “Yeah it looks good to me too. But what about the weight?” Bucky asked more to himself than to Steve.

“Well, in my opinion it was extremely too heavy.” Steve said “So it’s probably perfect for you.”

Bucky barked out a short laugh. Now that Steve was finished with the sword, he could see the odd fidgeting of Bucky’s hands and the sweat beading on his forehead.

“It’s okay to be nervous, Buck.” Steve said using the old nickname.

Bucky scoffed. “Why would I be nervous?” he asked waving around his shield. “I’m about to be 100 gold pieces richer. If anyone should be nervous, it should be those pompous bullies out there.” Bucky said pointing out the window at some of the competitors who were practicing on the fields. From where Steve was standing he could see the champion of the past 3 Swordplay Tournaments, Gilmore Hodge, and he definitely knew it. Steve watched as he swept the feet of an unsuspecting smaller competitor, knocking him flat on his back. He and his buddies seemed it to be pretty funny the way they guffawed and threw their heads back in laughter.

Before Steve or Bucky could say anything else on the matter - a horn rang out from the taller tower that stood over the arena like an angel.

“I think that’s my sign to get ready.” Bucky said filling the words with confidence. Bucky made a move to leave but Steve caught his shoulder.

“Hey,” Steve said staring right at his brother. “Be careful out there. No reward prize is worth your life.”

Bucky nodded, a small smile on his lips. “I’ll keep that in mind. You’re gonna be cheering for me in the stands right?”

“Of course. I want a clear view when you knock those bullies into the ground!” Bucky gave Steve a pat on the shoulder before running off.

Steve made his way into the crowd and found a good spot on the third row between a mother and her small child and an older man who Steve wasn’t quite sure was awake.

The tournament was supposed to go like this, all who were competing put their names in a sack and were pulled out one by one to see who they would be sparring against the 1st round. If you won that round you put your name in the sack again and so on and so forth until the last round. There were 6 rounds in all.

There were 32 competitors in all. They were scattered across the arena. Some of them were big and strong, others worked better on speed. Some were talkers while others kept to themselves. Almost all of them were cheaters.

Steve heard the trumpets song ring out and almost as if by magic Steve focused on the scene with rapt attention. This was it.

All the competitors lined up to see who would be fighting who. They revealed the bracket and Steve was thankful to see that Bucky and Hodge’s names were far apart from each other.

Bucky hated Hodge with a passion. Always told Steve of the rotten disrespect that Hodge had for about everyone. Hodge came from a more well off family, which led to him being spoiled and hot-headed.

Hodge was notorious for cheating. He would trip opponents, sabotage armor and swords and rumors spread about going even as far as injuring fighters even before the competition began. However, none of these rumors were proven and Hodge's streak remains intact.

For now.

Bucky was the third battle to commence. The first was won very easily by the bigger man, but the second had taken quite a bit long since one was very good at dodging. Steve could respect the patience in the man's technique. Wore out his opponent with apt dodges until he had enough ground to disarm him.

Bucky's fight began, Steve could already tell Bucky would win but remembered a conversation they had had a few days earlier.

("I don't want to win any of the first fights too fast. If I give away too much that could put a target on my back.")

Bucky performed this perfectly. If Steve didn't know any better he might of thought nothing of his performance. Bucky's opponent lunged first and Bucky responded with a parry moving backward defensively, Bucky allowed a few more just like it before turning on his heel striking the opponent in the back knocking him to his knees. Bucky won.

Cheers rang out before Bucky kindly helped the guy up to his feet. The man graciously accepted even though he was looking disappointed. They were hurried off the stage. Steve slumped back in his chair allowing himself to relax for a moment now that Bucky was in the second round.

It continued like that for about a half hour and Steve surveyed the fighters studying their patterns and techniques that they used. In 14th match a man came and sat down to the side of Steve. He was an older man, with grey streaks of hair speckling across the black hair that

reached down his face with just the smallest stubble on his chin.. Steve could tell he was somewhat of a richer man because of the small thin glasses that laid on the lower part of his nose. Steve was also somewhat intrigued because despite it being a scorching hot day, he wore blue robes the same color as the early night sky.

“May I uh, sit here?” the man asked politely in an accent Steve had never heard before. Steve nodded and briskly scooted closer to the mother. She barely noticed seeing as she was trying to wrangle her skittish son.

The 15th round began. This was Hodge’s battle. The other competitor was young. Too young to be in this fight. He had a brave face but his feet staggered over the smooth rubble ground.

It started. A flash of a second later Hodge lunged forward and attacked the young man with a string of relentless attacks. The young man blocked to the best of his ability but was quickly overpowered by the brute. Hodge had won.

The crowd seemed to simultaneously droop, like a weight had just fallen on the shoulders. Steve was with them. The only one who didn’t seem to droop was the funny man from earlier. He sat straight, looking ahead with a small smile. Steve was astonished by the confidence he seemed to hold in his stare.

The man shook his head amused. “Tsk Tsk, never did like bullies like that.” he said.

“I don’t think anyone really likes bullies sir.” Steve responded. “Some people just say they don’t so they don’t have to fight back.”

The man now looked curious. “What makes you say that?” he inquired.

“Ah well, I’ve uh noticed...” Steve trailed off

“Yes?” said the man as the 16th fight began to take place.

“People get tired of getting knocked back so they run the other way. But if you run they don’t let you stop.”

The man seemed to like his answer. “And I thought old men like me were supposed to be wise.” the man said scrunching up his nose. Steve chuckled and held out his hand

“Steve Rogers from Brooklynboro.” he said still watching as the fighters danced around each other. It looked like it was coming to a close.

The man took his hand and shook it vigorously. “Steve Rogers from Brooklynboro...” the man said. “Brooklynboro... that’s uh.. that’s North of the castle correct?” Steve nodded. “One of the more outlying villages?”

“Yep. It’s small but far from any of the uh... problems.” Steve said, trying to choose his words carefully. “It’s like a haven,I guess.” the fight was now over and they started getting ready for the second round.

“And... you don’t like this haven?” The man asked.

“Ah well, I just kinda wish that I could do something. You know?” Steve said. “So far away from the problem that we can’t do nothing.”

“I see.” the man mused stroking his stubble beard.

“I tried to go fight once,”

“Hmm?”

“Bucky dragged me back here,” Steve shook his head fondly, “But they probably wouldn’t have accepted me anyway.” Steve looked out onto the field. It seemed that Bucky was going to fighting second this time.

“Ahh, Don’t say that!” the man said, “I’m quite sure that you’ll make it someday!”

Steve was oddly touched. “Thanks-” Steve said turning to the man -only to find that the man had made a hasty and sudden exit. He was gone!

“Hello-?” Steve said but his attention was grasped elsewhere as Bucky’s fight began. The man was soon forgotten.

Bucky’s second fight didn’t go as well as the first. His opponent relied on strength and was efficient in speed as well, Steve looked on the board and saw his name was Sam. The two fighters held their swords tight, their shields ahead of them, and feet locked in place being ready to pounce forward when it was right. The fight started. Sam lunged forward to which Bucky responded with a block and a parry. They entered into a standoff, circling the stage. Steve could see the mechanics in Bucky’s brain whirring. Strategy and techniques shined so clearly in the fighter as if was chainmail on his chest.

Steve saw Bucky purposely leave himself open tricking Sam into a feint. Sam lunged forward and Bucky disengaged, twisted around knocking his sword into the similar metal. The sound rang out, amplified by the sheer force, and Bucky left Sam defenseless with a flick. He twisted Sam’s sword so it hit the ground then kicked him on the chest, forcing him backward. Bucky had won.

The third round went like that as well, but by the fourth Steve could see Hodge in the barracks looking more and more cross. Then finally as if Hodge couldn't hold back, he stormed towards Bucky. Fear crept into Steve but tried to keep a level head as he inched forward subconsciously. There was no way Hodge would *attack* Buck in broad daylight! Hodge was stupid but not that stupid. The Nobles ignore a lot of things but couldn’t ignore something like that. Too bad they could ignore threats.

Bucky was nervous. Nervous about a lot of things. Nervous how Steve and Bucky were going to make it through winter, nervous about entering the tournament, nervous about losing, and somehow... even more nervous about winning.

Bucky's father taught him about a lot of things out in the woods. Bucky remembers when he was a kid, grabbing a crossbow and heading out, eager to shoot far and confidently like his father did. Bucky's father taught him more than just how to shoot a crossbow, how to hunt, more than how to use a sword and shield. He taught him how to survive.

"The easiest way to not get shot isn't raising your shield. The easiest way to not get shot is to not raise your sword."

That's what Bucky's father said those years back. When Buck was a kid and before his father was caught in the crossfire.

Buck stayed true to the wisdom. Don't become a target. It's that simple. That's why he's nervous.

Bucky knows he'll win. He's got the skill. He doesn't want to brag but while he's never made himself a target, Steve has, and when that happens Bucky comes and grabs him out. Makes for very good practice.

If-When Bucky wins this fight, he'll make himself a target... and a lot of stuck up boys here have pretty fine aim.

Speaking of stuck up boys. Bucky wasn't really surprised when Hodge came storming up. He was trying to act casual but was desperately failing. Bucky imagines you could only really get the same effect if you saw a bear trying to smile. Bucky tried to ignore him- not let the nervousness show- but couldn't stop the barely noticeable shaking of his foot. Good thing Hodge has about the same perception as a dead horse.

"Pretty good fights out there, huh?" Said Hodge, an uneasy ferociousness lining his words.

Bucky barely looked up, taking a deep breath, "I suppose. Haven't really noticed." Bucky's hands fiddled with his sword.

Hodge bristled. "You Know, I couldn't really help but notice your fight." here we go. "Got some real skills there. If I didn't know better I'd say you were trained by a master." his words were complementary but the tone of his voice was the same as a snake.

"Huh." Bucky said staring straight ahead at Hodge. "Well good thing you know better."

It was like watching a bull get mad, Hodge's eyes narrowed and his hands clenched. Before the bully could even begin to retaliate, Bucky sprang up.

"Better get ready for the next round." Bucky dared. This isn't his thing but since he's already a target might as well be a big target. Bucky even patted Hodge on the shoulder before he practically ran to polls. He managed to only stoke the fire, not get burned, but at the rate the fights were going he would end up fighting Hodge in the sixth fight. How perfect.

But all Bucky could do then was breathe. So he did.

Steve swears if Hodge tried to do anything to Buck, he would hop over the fence dividing the competitors and the watchers. Even if that means he'd probably break something with his luck.

Steve glared daggers -no wait- he glared poisoned daggers at Hodge. What a lowlife. But it looked like Bucky handled it pretty well. Steve couldn't hear but he could see and it looked... fine.

The 5th round began, only two fights this time. Both Bucky and Hodge were fighting different people. Bucky's fight was a question of speed. His opponent was quick and agile - much faster than Bucky. Bucky instead used strength to try and push the man back, it worked and Bucky won the fight.

Steve wished and wished that Hodge would lose. He didn't.

The crowd was in full swing. Everyone was excited to see who would win, would Hodge continue his streak or would this nobody newcomer knock him off his throne. Steve eyed the nobles on the top floor. They laughed and clanked goblets of goodness knows what. The final battle is always the most dangerous. None of them seem to be concerned that someone could very well die in a few moments.

The nerves tore through Steve's blood like an arrow through the sky, it didn't seem like the arrow would ever find its target, as nervous energy flowed through the palms of his feet to the twitching of his hands.

Bucky and Hodge were on the field now. Hodge's friends laughed behind him, spitting around insults at Bucky. Bucky remained stoic and unwavering, his eyebrows up, showing he wouldn't take to any of the crude nonsense. Bucky's hands were tight on the hilt of his sword, at any given moment it could be pulled out with a speed that would surprise most people.

A bell rang to start the battle. Steve thought that they always wait a couple seconds because they know that's when the arrow picks up the most speed.

RING!

Bucky and Hodge both lunged at each other. That was uncommon for Bucky as usually he would wait using defense to see the opponent, But if he was going to win this fight he would need to be top of the game. The swords clashed together, with Hodge going low aiming for his legs and Bucky barely being able to twist his sword to meet it in time. Bucky used his strength to push the swords higher and then hit Hodge in the chest with the bulk of his shield. Hodge stumbled back and Bucky twirled his sword in a daring fashion. With what sounded like a growl Hodge lunged forward. Then he did something odd, he dropped his shield.

Steve narrowed his eyes, his fears not quite formed but lurking on the edges of his vision. Like a sick dark feeling rising.

Getting close to Bucky, Hodge unleashed a whirlwind of attacks with both hands on his sword. None of them met, but Steve could see the sweat on Bucky's brow. It was wearing him down. Then in a split moment, Steve saw it.

A small glint in Hodge's Armor, something that wasn't supposed to be there.

A knife.

A knife that Bucky didn't know about.

Steve stood up in alarm before he even knew what he was going to do and like with his legs he could feel his mouth moving to form words. To form a warning.

"Bucky!" Steve shouted trying to get his attention. He had to tell him, had to warn him. Bucky didn't hear him, too focused on Hodge's onslaught of attacks.

"Bucky!" Steve tried again not caring about the strange and some offended looks he received.

"BUCKY!" This time Bucky heard him.

Bucky met Steve's eyes. Steve pointed to Hodge and yelled as hard as he could with his barely working lungs. "Knife!"

Bucky's face lit up with realization, then it quickly morphed into a fearful one. Bucky quickly changed his approach.

Steve felt his heart drop as Bucky dropped his shield as well and parried to the side. Hodge grabbed the hidden knife, careful to remain invisible to the angels on the top barracks and

lunged forward with both Sword and Knife.

But Bucky was faster. With a quick burst Bucky twisted Hodges sword out of his hand and caught the hilt of the Knife with his hand. Bucky used his strength to raise the Knife high. High enough for everyone to see.

Gasps rang out as people tried to understand what had just happened. Some people up top rubbed their eyes and whispered to one another, the people on the bottom knew exactly what had happened and recovered much quicker.

A beat of silence occurred. The corners of Steve's mouth silently rose.

Cheers rang out from all corners of the arena. What a match! What a fighter! Steve heard somewhere someone call out to arrest Hodge for cheating. Everyone was on their feet trying to get closer to the winner. Bucky's hands fell onto his knees. He was finally getting a moment to breathe.

"Bucky! Bucky!" Steve shouts were no longer ones of worry and danger. Instead they were of joy and victory. Bucky heard his brother's shouts and went to him. Bucky easily lifted Steve onto the Arena.

the two brothers had no idea the hardship and beauty of what was to come, they enjoyed this victory. They could only hope they could enjoy more victories to come.

"You won?! Really?"

Steve smiled. Bucky had gotten his reward about an hour ago. They were lucky they were able to meet up with their good friend Jim Moritz before he headed off to the war. They weren't sure if the championship would take long or not.

“Really Jim it’s true!” Bucky said shaking his head.

“Nah, nah, this-this is impossible,” Jim said happily surprised. “You’re telling me the same kid, this kid,” he pointed at Bucky now who had his head back in laughter. “Who was nervous about talking to little miss Sadie, Won the Championship!?”

Steve laughed hard as he remembered ‘Miss Sadie’. That was a party of a time.

“Well, I hate to break it to you Jim, but we’re not kids anymore.” Bucky said with a smile.

“But uh, you’re still nervous to talk to Sadie.” Steve shot back and sent Jim into another hoot of laughter.

“Hey! Hey,” Bucky said trying to tame his friends teasing. “That’s not how you talk to the Champion. Besides Sadie is terrifying, I fully believed she wanted to hang me.” Steve and Jim only laughed more.

HONK!!!!!!

Steve and Jim stopped laughing, their happy mood now sour. That was the warning to tell the soldiers they were leaving. Jim was leaving.

Bucky let out a deep sigh. He stood up from his seat, they decided to get some food since they had won a lot of more gold. Bucky hugged their friend giving him a good hard squeeze. They didn’t know if they would ever see him again. Steve shook hands with the man.

“Hey, be safe out there.”

“I’ll try.” with a huff, Jim clapped the two brothers on the shoulder. “See you on the other side.”

“Or when the war is over.” Bucky hoped.

“Or that, we’ll see. We all know I have a tendency to find trouble.”

“More like make trouble.” Steve said slyly. Jim barked out a laugh.

And without another word, Jim was gone. Off to fight a never ending war. A war with both sides corrupt. Both sides unwilling to back down. Sending in soldiers, Men and Women to fight to resolve, or never resolve, their petty disagreements. Steve hated it all.

Bucky sighed. “C’mon, Let’s go.”

“Go where?” Steve asked shoving his hands into his pocket as he followed Bucky to Heaven knows where.

“Anywhere we want, Steve.” Bucky said. “We’re practically heros now!”

“Well, you’re a hero. I was sitting in the stands.” Steve said degrading himself.

Bucky gave him a hard shove forward. “We both know there’s no way I would’ve won without you there.”

Steve shrugged. “Whatever you say-” Steve stopped, the blur of a shadow catching his eye. When you lived in this kingdom you learned to spot the signs of a fight. Signs of a threat. Steve knew when someone was following them.

Steve grabbed Bucky's arm. "Buck." A silent message, it said it all. Steve turned his head to see if the threat was still there. In a small alleyway he saw three thugs, oddly familiar, murmuring amongst themselves, trying and failing to casually look their way.

They had swords. Big ones. Just like the ones in the Championship.

Oh no, These were Hodge's friends.

"Run!" Steve shouted and both brothers took off in a sprint. Steve managed to keep up with Bucky for exactly five seconds before his weak legs gave out on him and he began to stumble. Bucky barely looked back as he grabbed Steve's arm, completely understanding Steve's physical... weakness. Bucky pulled him along.

"GET THEM!" Steve heard thug #2 holler. The thugs were on their heels, Bucky and Steve ran through the village trying to lose them. They ran past adults and children, Men and Women. They were starting to cause quite a ruckus. People shouted in surprise as they hit the side of their carts causing them to lose what little food they had for sale.

They turned quickly into an alley and then quickly turned again. Bucky silently shushed Steve hoping they lost them for good.

Steve hurried, trying to ignore his aching legs and focused on quieting his panting throat. He felt like he had just ran a hundred miles. Bucky didn't look tired at all.

"W-We he he... we lost them?" Steve said the words feeling like fire on his tongue.

Bucky looked out with a worried face and pinched eyebrows. "...Yeah. Yeah I think we lost them."

"I think those were Hodge's buddies." Steve said still on the brink of passing out.

“Makes sense then, why they were so stupid and brash to attack us in the middle of the day.” Bucky said trying to add a light to his words, but they remained dark and bitter.

“I think we can go now.”

They warily stepped out from their hiding place. Slowly they stepped into the main plaza. Steve was so focused on running he didn't even see where they ended up.

Bucky looked left and right searching the area for signs of trouble and somewhat hated that he didn't find any. Because when you found a sign at least you knew for sure. If you didn't, there's no way to find out if there really wasn't danger until the day is long and passed.

Steve loved the Plaza. It was in the middle of the city, which meant everything was equal distance away from it, but was always deserted. No one really told Steve why but he put the pieces together when he was younger.

It was because of that Shield.

The one with the red and blue stripes. The shield that was circular -different from other shields- and a bright white star in the middle.

Apparently when Steve was just a baby, the massive stone column where the Shield lay just appeared out of nowhere. One minute it was just a plain grass area, the next it appeared like it never hadn't been. Just like a giant from the tales dropped in on the ground.

There was also a prophecy with it. Steve could never remember the exact words but he knew it had something to do with the next King! But Steve thought that that promise was a bit mocking to the people. The shield's been here almost 26 years, now. Steve would come by here and sketch of few things whilst laying on the wide daunting stairs. Many pages were filled with sketches of the Shield, some at night, some at day, one drawing even had Steve lifting the Dumb thing even though he was barely the size of it. But darn, if it didn't look majestic.

And it was then when they had just begun to relax that of course everything went to crap.

Hodge's friends came round the corner, their swords held high in the air. Steve stumbled back to avoid the shining metal. It hit the floor with a CLANG! Steve fell into the dirt and created dust when he got up in a hurried flight.

“Go! Go! Go!” Bucky yelled continuing to pull Steve along like a mule. At a split second Bucky pushed Steve forward trying to save him from being impaled by steel. Steve was feeling like a ragdoll. Bucky's efforts did not go unpunished, when Bucky pushed Steve out of the way of an unfair death, one of the thugs cut him on the arm. Bucky cried out in pain before kicking the man in the chest and hurried onward. They were trapped against the wall of the circular column. Steve only saw one way out. They couldn't go left or right so they would have to go up! This time Steve pulled his injured brother up the stairs. Kicking with what little strength he had at their oppressors.

They didn't have weapons, they didn't have armor, they didn't even have something they could clobber them with. All they were surrounded with pebbles that had been chipped of the stone with time and the moss that stained the cracks and crevices of the structure. They had thought that no one would come after them the very same day. That was a mistake. Steve thought more about the Column, It was only a few feet tall at best, a fall from that height shouldn't hurt them too bad. Well shouldn't hurt Bucky, Steve very well knew that he could be crawling and somehow end up snapping like a twig.

“What are we jumping?” Bucky asked quickly.

“Looks like it.”

But before they could make their escape, one of the thugs managed to grab Bucky's foot from lower on the stairs. The sudden halt forced the Champion and Steve to the ground. Both of them knowing the importance of time in a chase, they knew one second could mean the difference, they scrambled forward running ahead past the shield. Both of them on either sides like the Shield had split them apart onto two different lands. Steve looked to jump off the edge but stopped in his tracks, like the stone had come to life and rooted him in place. He saw two of the thugs on the ground, swords ready and a malicious glint in their eyes.

“Well, well, well,” said one of the thugs, who Steve took to be the leader thug. “If it isn’t the Champion! Made a lot of people unhappy what you did today.” The man twirled his sword in the air, stopping it to pick off a few specks of dirt. Steve was blinded by the sunlight reflected off of the weapon.

“Made a lot of other hard-working people happy today too!” Bucky said. “Did my best.” The man started to walk forward.

The man got a little too close to Bucky for Steve’s taste. “Hey, He won fair and square! You have a problem you can take it up with the nobles!”

Then the man slashed his sword at Him! “Don’t test me, little guy, you don’t look like you would give up much of a fight.” Something changed in the villain’s face. He looked at Bucky... “Guess I’ll find out after I’m finished with You!”

“Bucky!”

Steve saw what was happening, the dirty Thug had lifted his sword fully intent on delivering a finishing blow. The sword was high in the air but Steve knew it wouldn’t stay that way for long. Every moment brought it closer to its target. Bucky pathetically lifted his arms as some sword of makeshift shield.

Shield.

Without any time to think, to question, to even come up with the thoughts that should have flown through his mind -Steve ran forward a feeling that someone else was behind him pushing him forward but not to pick up the shield...

The shield that rose from the rock like nothing had been holding it back.

No, something pushed Steve forward was for something else. A want- no, a *need* to protect his brother who had been by his side since he was barely a baby. Who had protected him

from the fights in the streets and the world. Now Steve would do the same.

With the shields weight on his arm, he lifted the mighty forged weapon...

The sword fell down upon it...

And the sound that rang out woke the entire kingdom from their slumber.

Chapter End Notes

Ever hear the saying "Dogs are a man's best friend"?

well lemme tell you

"Feedback is a Writer's best friend."

Sorcery

Chapter Summary

All Steve knew...

Was that he felt very very very Weird.

Chapter Notes

Hi Guys! I've had just a blast writing this story! Sorry if it is a little jumpy, I did my best to properly portray the complicated emotions... So yeah... It was a hassle!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Sire! Sire!” a bumbling man came in, short in stature but not in mind, his intellect was far greater than any common peasant could dream. He needed to see the king. Desperately. He had been the King’s advisor from the very beginning, when the previous King and Queen had been assassinated and since then the King and himself and managed to grab power to continue their rise with the ranks. That was years ago. All of the fears they’ve had the past 2 decades were finally coming to past. .

Someone had pulled that blasted Shield out of the stone.

He rushed through the shrouded hallways. The thick, bejeweled green drapes clouded the windows, letting just a sliver of light through. Barely enough to walk not enough to properly allow the man to convey the hysterical urgency of the matter.

The door was just up ahead, guarded by two knights. The knights were covered in head-to-toe armor, all of which armor looked exactly the same. Some might think these were not men at all and in fact just statues by the way their backs stiff and their posture stone.

The man spoke to the two guards. “I wish to speak to the king.” He said.

The guards silently regarded him before stepping aside to allow him through. The man took a shaky breath before entering the cursed throne room.

The doors opened with a deafening whoosh, as if instead of just opening one of the many rooms in the castle, he had opened a gateway to the underworld with its demonic leader inevitably inside. Inside he saw the dark throne with the hues of a poisonous snake, lined on the corners with a shimmering gold, some of the only light in the tall boisterous room. A little bit before the throne was the king. His appearance was a deep contrast from the dark colors. With red robes and a sword laying on his side.

“Your Highness?” He called out to the man lazily watching the throne.

“Yes, Zola?” The King’s voice drawled, dripping with a sense of entitlement that doused the man’s -now Zola- confidence and left a lingering fear in his chest.

“T-There’s...” Zola gulped. “There’s been a change!”

The king’s demeanor changed from a casual terror, into to a still striking coldness. The very air seemed to grow thinner. The king turned around, his fiery eyes being the only sense of heat as they bore into Zola’s.

“A change in *what*, Zola?” He spat out turning to the now trembling advisor. “You’re going to have to be more specific-”

“The shield!” Zola blurted out. “Someone has *pulled out the shield!*”

The king was silent for a moment. Zola feared for the worst. That he would call the guards and have him executed. Or worse down to the dungeons. A rational part of him knew that the king needed him. He was the only one who had the knowledge of arcane artifacts and their power. That didn’t stop Zola’s sense that he might be struck down now, if he was lucky.

What the king did instead was even worse. He laughed.

The esteemed power managed to breathe between laughter to inform Zola of his plight. “Oh, Zola...” he said scoffing. “You worry too much!”

Something his master does excellently was making people doubt. Doubt any good luck you received and question every possible plan of action. He made his enemies *like* it when the worst was to come. The worst was always just the worst. You could trust the evil. The evil was sure. That’s why Zola was so unsure of his reaction- surely any minute he would send out an army to the square and kill whoever dared to lay a finger on the Shield! Surely!

The king must have noticed Zola’s confusion, he huffed. “Please Zola, you of all people must know that that shield, all that talk of prophecy and destiny, was just a thing of nonsense!”

“B-But-!” Zola floundered.

“That’s enough, Zola!” He said. “I’m tired of your meaningless warnings!” He shot over his shoulders starting to ascend the stairs to the throne.

He sat down onto the skillfully carved stone throne. “If you’re so worried, Zola,” the king said in a false care. “Then we will go down to the square. Assure my people that they have nothing to fear while *I* am in power.”

“But we were planning to visit the troops. There are men dying against the rebels-”

“And?”

“...Nothing. I will uh- ready the carriages. Thank you S-Sire.”

“No, I thank you, Zola, I think it’s time I remind the people who their king actually is... *me*”
,

The glint in the power hungry Tyrant made Zola scurry out of the room, just as his foot met the stone floor in the hall, he heard the King say,

“The King Red Skull.”

In the world that Bucky knew, it was not strange for him to think he was going to die.

Now he’s had a few accidents, Steve has gotten him in quite a few fights over the years, and sickness takes away a few people every winter.

But rarely does he think he’s going to die twice in one day.

Their town was small and even though they were relatively close to the Castle, the people who lived here were soon shipped off to fight. When it was being decided whether or not Bucky would go, Bucky thought he was going to die. Then in the competition Bucky thought he was going to die. He’s always been wary of the unknown and what it holds.

But back to the matter at hand, the pesky imminent death.

Another thing that has been pretty rare for him is *actually* dying.

Bucky held his arms up, tense as he braced himself for the finishing blow, cursing everything out there that Steve would have to see this-

It didn't come. What came instead was small, scrawny, apparently had a death wish, and was holding something shiny.

Steve

Bucky watched with wide eyes as Steve held the circular shield high defending Bucky from a sure grave. But that wasn't *possible*-

The sound that echoed from the impact of the thug's Sword hitting metal bounced around in Bucky's ears and he distantly thought that sound would never leave his head.

All the air and thought was forced out of him as a shining bright force pushed Bucky back. Where was it coming from? Bucky looked up trying to see where the blinding light was.

It was *Steve*. Again. Steve was wrapped in a glow of basking light. It weaved up and down and around him and *through* him!

Something was happening to him. Bucky knew a little bit about magic and how some would use it. He also knew that sometimes objects held magic. That shield! The Shield was doing something to his brother!

Bucky's mouth was dry as the light eventually receded.

Instead of his tiny little brother that trips over his own feet, was something else.

Steve was standing now, much taller than he was ten seconds ago, holding the shield with one arm. A confused overwhelmed feeling shown on his face, in his eyes.

"Steve?" Bucky asked. He wasn't sure what he was asking.

Steve stood up a little taller looking at his much bigger hand. He tried to take a step forward, calling out his brother's name. "Buck-AAAh!"

Steve felt weird. Really weird. He was exhausted from being chased everywhere, his heart hurt from seeing Bucky almost die and on top of it all, he felt *so weird*.

He looked bigger. Taller, stronger. It was so strange because he didn't feel it. Actually he just felt really weird, believe it or not.

"Steve?" he turned his head to Bucky who was still sitting on the stone. Then Steve looked at the shield that was still hanging loosely on his arm.

I think that means something.

But for the life of him, his mind couldn't seem to find the answer as to what. He'll just have to find out later. He had more pressing issues at the moment.

"Buck-AAAh!" Steve tried to step forward -a dire mistake- as his newly transformed legs had not been accustomed to, he slipped and fell down the edge of the column. He hit the ground with a thud and the shield with a BONG!

"What's happened to me?" Steve muttered under his breath as he rose to his knees.

"Steve!" Bucky called hopping off the edge to meet Steve.

"Hey, Buck." Steve said his brows furrowed. Out of breath but in a way he never had before. "I feel very weird."

In all the chaos, The two men completely forgot about the thugs who were simply watching with open mouths and wide eyes. As it often happens in this town, the wide commotion had started to attract the people in the shops and in the market. People had started to gather and gasped when they noticed the absolute absence of the Shiny Artifact that had been with them for so long.

They started to talk.

“W-Where’s the shield?”

“Mamma! It’s gone!”

“Did somebody pull it? Did *you* pull it!”

“That’s so strange.”

“Look! He has it! I saw it!” A young man pointed at Steve much to the two brothers’ despair.

“I saw it too!” Said the young lady next to him. “He pulled it out and then -and then he grew!”

The calamity only grew more frantic. The questions multiplied and the answers only seemed to divide. More fingers were pointed at Steve and the people’s faces turned a little too angry for his liking. He noticed the two thugs that were on the ground looked at each other. Seemingly trying to decide whether or not to continue to pursue them. Their hands tightened around their swords as they found their answer.

“Run.” Bucky said practically reading Steve’s mind.

They quickly commanded their feet to start running. Steve got up warily not wanting another repeat of the previous embarrassing events. As his feet started to pick up speed, he stopped.

“D-Do I take the shield?” Steve sheepishly asked Bucky still unsure about the darn thing.

“ *Yes, you should take the shield!!!*”

So Steve tightened his grip and took off behind Bucky.

They both ran at full speed down through the village. Neither was entirely sure about where they were going.

Steve has run a lot in his life but he’s never ran quite like this. He seemed to fly through the streets but his feet marched on the ground, leaving footprints in the tough dirt. His arms whooshed back and forth, like a machine, pushing him forward. The shield was on his right arm and bounced along with him. The best thing about it? He didn’t even feel tired. Normally his lungs would begin to stall and his legs would feel the exertion moving through them. But he felt fitter than he ever had before. Steve looked behind him to see the beginnings of a mob and looked ahead to see that Bucky had disappeared. Panicking for a small moment, he looked around to see that Bucky was falling behind *him*.

That was new.

Urgh this wasn’t going to work! Steve scanned for possible hiding places. They had just turned a corner and saw nothing but 3 smooth, tall, stone walls. There was no way out.

“Maybe-” Bucky gasped. “Maybe we can scale it?”

“There’s no way *I* can get up...there...” Steve trailed off as he noticed the overwhelming size of his muscled arm. “Well actually.”

“Well actually indeed.”

Both Bucky and Steve called out in fright, thinking they had at least a few moments before the people and ruffians caught up to them.

“Relax, I mean no harm.” Said the man. Steve squinted in the sunlight before he realized who it was.

“You’re the strange old man from earlier!”

“Strange? Old? Now while I can’t really get mad for the latter, I can very well be upset over the first!”

“Who is this?” Bucky asked.

“My name is Dr. Erskine.” He said himself, informing them both.

“We met at the Championship.” Steve clarified.

“Well more like *you* met *me* -but that’s not important. What is important, is whether or not you are going to let me save you.”

“Excuse me?” Bucky asked a little miffed.

“I’m sorry I don’t mean to be blunt, but there is a lot to be attended to!” Dr Erskine said with urgency. “If we’re going to get out of here before those ruffians arrive, then we have to go now! Or at least in 20 seconds.”

“But where are we going?” Steve asked.

“My home.” The doctor said as it was obvious.

“...but *why*?”

Erskine's face turned serious, a stark contrast from his usual casual joy. "Because there are lives depending on us. On *you*. Not just people in this war, in this kingdom, this time. But every life from this moment."

"This is because of that shield, isn't it?" Bucky asked.

"Of course it is! Did you not read the *very clear and obvious* message on the column! You couldn't have missed it!"

Steve rubbed the back of his neck.

Dr. Erskine sighed, his shoulders falling an inch. "Nevermind. Our transport should be arriving.... any minute now."

Almost on cue, Steve heard some sort of sparking behind him. Dr. Erskine smirked as Steve saw ring of orange sparks dancing in the air. As it grew, they could see that instead of the mossy wall that blocked their exit, it was the inside of a modest cottage. What wasn't modest were the jars and bottles that laid on the shelves or -some more shocking- floated in the air!

Bucky breathed out a slur of indecipherable words, eventually he managed to spit out the word, "*Magic!*"

Dr. Erskine wasted no time as he strode forward with speed unusual for a man his age and practically hopped through the magic doorway. When he turned back, he looked very cross to see that neither of them had followed.

"What are you waiting for? The angry mob coming to put you in stocks?"

Steve didn't have a better argument and he thought if it came down to it, Bucky could probably take this guy. Or maybe... Steve could? Now?

Bucky hissed as Steve walked forward. “Steve! This is magic! Magic. Is. Illegal!”

“I’m pretty sure touching this thing,” Steve gestured to the shield. “Is also illegal.”

Bucky glared and tapped his foot furiously. Bucky only stopped his attack on the gravel when he came to a decision. “Fine! But -Don’t... touch anything.” He said gravely.

Steve and Bucky shuffled near the flaming circle. Then with a few big steps they stepped forward and watched as the village they grew up in shrink smaller and smaller, as if it was running away, until it completely disappeared. Then all it was was just another memory on the long journey they would tread on.

Steve liked a lot of things, Tea wasn’t really one of them. But while he was never really fond of tea, the tea that Dr. Erskine served Bucky and him was actually quite nice. A little tangy but not too sweet. Steve knew that he should be worrying about a thousand other things but found himself quite content focusing on the musty gold colored tea.

“Is it good? Too hot, too cold?” Dr. Erskine asked.

“Oh no, it’s very good-“

“It’s fine.” Bucky huffed.

“Ah.” Steve felt as the atmosphere in the room pulled tighter and tighter, trying to choke the life out of them. Bucky was slumped in the cushioned chair, switching from sending dirty looks at Dr. Erskine, Steve or the tea in front of him that hadn’t been touched yet.

Steve took a long sip from his drink.

Dr. Erskine's cottage was small and stuffy. Books were strewn about with little care and Steve suspected the dark blue colored walls were once a much lighter color. They were surrounded by woods and trees and every shade of green in every direction. Dr. Erskine must not get a lot of visitors. Steve wouldn't like to live like that. So far from another person. He'd be lonely out of his mind.

"So..." Dr. Erskine coughed. "I'm sure you have many questions and I have a lot to explain." Bucky scoffed.

"You're right, again." Steve tried to the best of his ability to push back the invisible awkward force.

Dr. Erskine gave a reassuring smile, "Since you cannot remember the prophecy you've lived with your entire life, I'll have to remind you."

"I know the dumb prophecy." Bucky said rolling his eyes. "Whosoever can lift and be this shield, a little on the nose there, be uh a shield for peace and a shield for the people, Shall be the next Great King of Katepano and restore the Kingdom to its former glory. That part alarms me. "

Steve's eyes widened. He was going to be king?!

Dr. Erskine chuckled, rubbing and rolling his hands off each other. "Well, It wasn't my best work, but it did its job."

At that, Bucky leaned forward. "Wait, are you saying you *wrote* that prophecy?"

Erskine's eyes looked left and right. "Was that not clear?"

Steve rubbed his forehead grievously. How had this day come to this?

“Listen, *Doctor*, ”. Bucky said mockingly, “We went with you, against my better wishes, so now you owe us some answers. Just.... Start at the beginning. And don’t leave anything out!”

kj;k Dr. Erskine looked at his feet for a moment before sighing and giving in. “I am a wizard-“

“Figures.”

“Bucky!”

“Sorry. Continue.”

“ *Anyway*, I am a wizard, I’ve been for quite some time now. I was taught by a mystical force older than this kingdom itself.”

“Wait, How old?” Steve asked.

“I don’t- That’s not important, what is important is that I know my stuff. She, the Uh mystical force, well she has an artifact. And this artifact can see through time.”

Steve and Bucky shared a look. The information didn’t sit well in their stomachs.

Nevertheless Erskine continued. “26 years ago she saw something.” All of the sudden Steve had a finger in his face. “You! You in all your scrawny glory picking up a shield and becoming one of the greatest kings in history!” Dr. Erskine’s glasses shimmered in the light. “All we had to do was give you a shield.”

Steve blinked a few times, desperate to understand. His mouth moved up and down but his voice stayed as still as a rock. Bucky seemed to become a rock himself, didn’t speak or move, just stuck in a stiff position.

Dr. Erskine sighed feeling the weight he had gained over the years grow heavier and his back as it becomes more and more weary by the minute.

“Listen, this uh this is a *lot* to take in, I-I understand if you want some uh -time.” Erskine stood up now. “Goodness knows this has been a long day for me, I’m going to lay down, you’re free to make yourselves comfortable for the night.” He straightened. “But tomorrow morning I want you to tell me you’re decision and we’ll get started ... or not get started. We’ll see.” He started to head towards the dark wooden stairs leading upstairs.

“Wait,” Steve held out his hands. “What decision?”

Dr. Erskine raised an eyebrow. “Did I forget that part?” He said mostly to himself.

“Obviously.” Bucky said with a hint of dejectedness in his throat.

Luckily Dr. Erskine wasn’t one that could be offended so easily, “Your decision,” he said slowly, “Is whether or not you want to end this war, or go spend your *prize* money.” Steve could’ve sworn there was pride in his voice.

And with that Dr. Erskine retreated to his quarters to slumber until very late the next morning.

Bucky and Steve let the silence stew a little bit before either one of them spoke.

Steve cursed his mind for being so blank. “I probably should’ve paid closer attention to the prophecy.”

Bucky barked out a short laugh. “Yeah maybe.”

The short tapping of Steve's fingers as they met wood was deafening.

"You know, you were there." Bucky said a sliver of his old self starting to break through. "When that darn thing fell out of the sky." Bucky gestured at the Shield that was leaning beside the extravagant fireplace.

"I was?"

"Yeah. Just a baby."

"Huh." Steve wondered if Bucky would make a joke about fate.

Steve saw Bucky run a limp hand over his face. Steve would be feeling the same way as him if he wasn't still in blend of shock and denial. Maybe he would wake up and find out that he was even more late than today for the championship. Maybe he simply just died. He was killed by those thugs and this was some weird afterlife. That was the denial part of him that thought that. The shock part was a little more degrading. Steve knew he was never the toughest guy, and he knew that no amount of training would change that for him like it did for Bucky. He knew there was an obvious reason why the man who had raised Buck and him, George Barnes, would always take Bucky hunting -and it wasn't because Mother needed a hand. How could he do what Dr. Erskine was proposing? How could he even try?

Steve was often a little too hard with himself. None of that was something he could control, he was *born* like this. Or like that. Steve might act like all that physical stuff didn't matter to him and he would shake off any reassuring Bucky or Jim would try to give him -but nothing really stopped the overwhelming feeling of uselessness.

Maybe that's why he tried to go fight in the war. To serve the kingdom, of course, but maybe even more so he could feel like he did something worthwhile. Something more. But his weak heart and skinny legs forged a tall obstacle that Steve couldn't ever get over.

He wanted to be a soldier to do something more. What's the difference if it's a soldier or a King doing something more. In the end, there are hundreds of fighters already out there

doing something more. Maybe Steve couldn't do that but he could do something more for them.

He could don the shield. That was the first line if he remembered correctly, be a shield for the people. For those soldiers out there. Give them hope that maybe the never-ending war... could be ended.

Steve felt the corners of his smiles turn upward. He looked at Bucky putting on the best Innocent Face he could.

Bucky glanced his way and stopped. Steve sweated as Bucky retaliated with a glare only a big brother could know how to do.

"No." Bucky groaned. "You cannot *possibly* be entertaining this idea."

"Well, I'm a little more than entertaining it--"

"No! No! This is insane!"

"...And?"

"Steve!"

" *Bucky.* "

Bucky groaned into his hands. Steve patiently waited for his pity party to be over and for him to inevitably agree. Bucky furiously tapped his foot before shaking his head and looking at Steve, dejected.

“We’ll talk about this tomorrow.” Bucky said going for the couch. Steve ended up sleeping on the floor.

“Oh my *heavenly* goodness!” A lady said with too much time on her hands. Her husband had gone off doing who knows what. That man always told her what to do, “Let’s go Marina” or “Don’t touch that, Marina” clouded her ears much too often. Today however was going to be a good day, she was talking with one of her bestest friends. Clarissa is the Butcher’s wife and she always knows all the hot gossip going on in the dreary town that they lived in.

Today Clarissa was telling Marina about the crazy disaster yesterday. Marina lived out in the edges of the desolate village but even *she* knew about the Magic shield and prophecy. Everyone knew!

“I’m telling you, someone lifted it!” Clarissa squeaked with her high voice.

“But how? My daddy told me that he and all the men tried to lift it -but it didn’t move an inch!” Marina was starstruck. “It must be so heavy! At least 5 pounds!”

Clarissa hummed to herself. “It’s probably a little more than that.” She muttered.

“Oh my!” Marina continued to gush. “Whoever has that shield must have such big arms!” The married woman blushed.

“I bet he’s so handsome!” Clarissa agreed.

“And I think…” Marina said smiling. “Isn’t whoever has the shield supposed to replace the King Red skull guy-“

“Marina!” Clarissa whispered-yelled “You shouldn’t say things like that! Anyone could hear you!”

“W-What? But I was just-“

“I-uh- I gotta go!” Clarissa yelled, Marina noticed her eyes were flickering over to soldiers that were passing through. Clarissa bolted away in the most lady-like fashion.

“What? Humph!” Marina was quite offended. “I bet whoever has the shield wouldn’t mind if I spoke my mind!”

“Mike! Mike!” A young boy ran down the stairs of the schoolhouse to his older brother. His older brother *always* walked him home and it was the best part of his day. His older brother was so strong and big -but mother and him knew that he was just a big softie.

“Hey, how is it, little guy.” Michael said ruffling his little brother, Neal’s, dirty blond hair.

“It was so good! I knew all the answers.” Neal said, “I didn’t miss one!”

“That’s so cool... did anyone give you a hard time?” Mike asked warily. Some of the other kids picked on other kids for the kick of it. Literally. Mike kicked them back.

“Oh no, Jax is still sore from the fight.” Neal said innocently.

“That’s good.”

“But...” *oh no* “There was a little trouble.”

Mike hardened. “How so?”

“Ms. Laney got really mad at us when some of the kids started talking about The Shield thing in the square.”

Huh?

“What?”

“You know? When somebody pulled out the shield? The kids were saying things like,” Neal took on a funny voice. “‘My dad says that that guy’s supposed to end the war!’ And other kids were saying, ‘He’s gonna replace the king!’”

Michael rubbed his arm uncomfortably, this was dangerous waters. “Yeah, Neal, maybe you shouldn’t say things like that so loud. Some people are... Sensitive to that kind of thing.”

Neal scrunched his face in the way that he always did when he was confused. “But-but why!” He exclaimed loudly.

“Shh!” Mike brought his finger to his mouth. “Let’s just go home, Neal, Ok?”

That shut Neal up. Clouds rolled over Mike’s heart. He didn’t mean to be so harsh.

“Michael?” Mike cursed himself. Neal never used his full name unless it was serious. “Do you think... That i-if whoever has the shield... maybe that guy... if he-e ends the war? Do you think Dad can come home?”

Mike felt his lips part, slowly breathing out all the shock and raw emotions from his little brother's words. The breathe seemed to rip through his lungs and heart.

"Yeah." Mike choked out. "We can hope."

Two older men sat down outside, their old age keeping them from having a casual walk, but nothing could stop the good friends having a nice talk in the shade.

The one on the left let out a boisterous laugh. They were reminiscing good times -it feels like it just happened yesterday. Where did all the time go? They remembered what it was like before. A good 40 years ago when there was *peace*.

People were *happy*.

Of course now it's gone all to worse. Guess it's true what they say. You can never get the time back.

The two elders had been talking about that shield. Apparently it's moved, Jeff says to Chris. He scoffs, Jeff also says that there's a secret rebellion rising somewhere west.

Ridiculous.

But seeing as it hurts to do practically everything else, Chris allows himself to wonder. Wonder what it would be like, to know for sure that their kids's children, their grandchildren, could have a life without fear?

Chris and Jeff agree, That would be the dream.

Dear Miss Carter,

I hope you've managed to stay out of trouble, The Kingdom of Didymos would not be able to handle you. You may decide if you wish to take that as a compliment. I hear you're doing well with your new position. Keep it up.

On sadder notes I'm sorry for the passing of your brother. He was a good man. He fought bravely. I wish he didn't have to fight at all.

Things in Katepano have been hectic to say the least. I'm afraid I can't say too much lest this scroll be intercepted but what I can tell you is alarming.

The Shield has found someone worthy. I know you never trusted that thing, but I know people who know about this and I would trust him with my life.

Do not worry. Everything in Katepano is fine. I know you're already getting wild ideas by the time you read this -But I assure you, you're services are not required.

Your friend,

Chester Phillips

- 1. I want to be clear when I mean it when I say your services are not wanted. Nor required.*

Margaret “Peggy” Carter scoffed and rolled her eyes at the ridiculous letter. Phillips was a stubborn man but a good one and he never knew when to ask for help. Or how for that matter.

Men.

She had just become a High Ranking servant to the king in Didymos. She was a prime strategist and she was glad her talents were finally being put to use after so much head-bashing. Peggy honestly didn’t mean to get in trouble. She just always strays far from the peace. It’s too boring.

Honestly, the letter was a desperate call for help -one that Peggy would hastily answer. She packed her bags, smoothed out her skirt, practiced her left hook, and headed off to the Kingdom of Katepano in the morning.

“That kingdom’s not going to know what hit it.”

Chapter End Notes

I Love Comments. :D:D:D:D

One For All

Chapter Summary

King Red skull tightens his hold on his people but there are few that will not tolerate his tyranny...

Chapter Notes

School is a nightmare, luckily I have this to fall back on and do instead of English Class.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Steve woke up before Bucky did. Bucky was strewn across the couch he had selfishly taken and left Steve with the much too small chair. The pillow Bucky had claimed to cuddling was slobbered with drool. Steve's chair was barely cushioned. It was no wonder that the crook in his back got him up before the sun rose.

He wished he didn't wake up so early. Being awake meant he would have to think about the events that plagued him less than a day ago. Think about all this talk about becoming a King, stopping the war -his mind ached.

Huh, strange that he worried so much after waking up late yesterday and now was worrying after waking up early today. Couldn't he ever just wake up on time?

Trying to help ease his suffering, Steve stretched his arms back, relishing the cracks and bumps that sounded.

RIP! Steve froze to see he had accidentally tore open his shirt. A small tear went right through his upper right shoulder.

Magically growing 3 sizes... he would have to get a lot of new shirts.

Steve laughed at the thought, but absurd as it sounded it made him think. What else had changed about him? When the light surrounded him? What about back when Bucky and Steve were running? Steve had never ever run like that before. His legs felt stronger, his throat felt stronger, taller-

Wait a minute, was he taller than Bucky??

Steve smirked at the thought. He absently messed with the torn fabric on his arms ...Were his arms stronger too? His eyes mischievously snapped to the large heavy table on the other side

of the room. Maybe if he...?

With just two long strides Steve was over there, curiosity overpowering his better judgement. Steve put both his hands underneath the long part of the rectangular table. With a mighty pull he attempted to lift it up-

He thanked his lucky star that the room was tall because the table went flying up as if it had weighed nothing but a feather.

“Whoa-! Hmmp!” Steve tried to correct his understatement of his strength. He only barely managed to not throw the whole table behind him. He would never live it down if he was caught looking like he was about to wreck an old man’s home. He very slowly began to lower the furniture.

“Steve? What in Katepano are you doing?”

Steve cried out in alarm dropping the table. It hit the dirt floor with a thud, painfully awaking the resident upstairs.

“Ah!” The pitiful squeak of a man who could only have just been woken from a deep slumber. The sound seemed to fall down the stairs.

Steve just stood there awkwardly as Dr. Erskine came down with his hair tousled and his beard unkempt. Bucky didn’t offer any sort of comfort, just let his hand hit his face and kept it there, probably hoping the world would disappear if he just didn’t look at it.

It didn’t.

“What, are you trying to destroy my house!?” Dr Erskine exclaimed with wild flailing arms.

“No! I just -uh- trying to see if I could lift the table.”

Dr. Erskine’s eyes shone bright with confusion. If you looked deep into his eyes you might even see the gears working at high speeds. The problem being stretched and twisted, mixed together with all of the facts and finally being tossed together like a ship in the ocean. Until the answer was the only thing left.

“Ah. You’re curious about your abilities.” He stated, a pleasant feeling washing over all of them.

“Yep.” Steve said popping the ‘p’, answering even though Dr. Erskine didn’t ask.

“Well, I suppose that’s to be human. Now!” He clapped his hands. “Instead of destroying my property how about I simply just tell you.” Erskine teased lightly with a smile. Relief seemed to burn inside Steve, the warmth setting him at ease and the smoke filled his whole with joy.

“Stop grinning Steve, you look like a puppy.” Bucky said as they followed Dr. Erskine out into the woods.

“Are you going to come down yet?” Bucky yelled at Steve who was currently at the top of the tallest tree he had ever seen in his life. The woods were dangerous, it was a common rule in every household. All the parents told their children, ‘Don’t go too far into the woods’ and especially ‘Don’t go alone.’

But Steve wasn’t alone. Bucky and Dr. Erskine were just a few feet below. The latter of which was telling him all of the symptoms of his new self. That was how he got here, when Dr Erskine slyly suggested he climb the tree.

Steve felt like the monkeys he had heard from stories. When the merchants would come to town and tell everyone about the wonders they had seen while they were selling pure garbage and emptying your pockets.

Was that what he was? A wonder? A story that would trail around with ones with ulterior motives?

He didn’t want to be like that. Just a ploy to get today’s change. He would rather be like the stories that Mother told Bucky and him. About heroes and making a difference. Those stories weren’t told for money or for fame, they were simple told because they inspired people.

“I’m serious Steve, get down here!”

“In a minute!” Steve shouted back to his worry wart of a brother. He was fine. He wouldn’t of come up this high if he didn’t think he wouldn’t be. Besides, he had never seen anything quite like this. Steve had never seen the ocean before but he heard it was a vast blue hue that rolled and waved through the air. It made it seem like the sky was all around you, they said, like you were flying by just looking forward.

Steve thought that that was the closest thing he could relate the scene before him. How the trees dotted the fields, the fields that rose and fell with the earth. Like waves. But instead of blue, it was green. Green everywhere, in the leaves in the wind, on the trees, in the grass. Steve could’ve sworn that the land was shifting, moving, in motion and in tune with the swaying of the trees and but against the sun as it moved from east to west.

“Alright, I’m coming down!”

“About time!”

Steve laughed as he hopped from branch to branch with the agility of a performer.

“That was amazing.” Steve breathed out. A sort of respect lined his words. This was a kind of power that no one should take for granted.

“Glad you like it.” Dr. Erskine said. “Those spells weren’t easy!”

“I would think so.” Steve said kindly.

“Now... the real question.” Dr. Erskine spoke solemnly. “What are you going to do with it?”

That was all that they needed to know now, wasn't it?

“I assume, you want him to fight your battles.” Bucky scathingly accused, His arms crossed as he daringly glared at the doctor.

“I want him to fight his battles.” Erskine defended. “These wars and these attempts for power affects us all, but the truth that the citizens and people don't know, is that none of them should be in power. Not the selfish nobles warring against the crown, and not the disgusting mongrel who has it! This war is meaningless! ”

Bucky flared. “Watch your tongue, Wizard. We have friends fighting in this war. Dying in this war.” Steve's heart felt a chain reach out and grasp it, pulling tighter with every bit of sad news.

“And I'm very sorry for that. I mean no disrespect. I'm trying to say that your friends shouldn't be there.” Dr. Erskine said, pleadingly. “And they don't have to be there.”

If we would do something about it. Steve thought, finishing Dr. Erskine's sentence.

“If Steve becomes a third choice, a better man suited for the crown, he could lead this kingdom into being what it once was. Worthy!”

“But there are-“

“I'll do it.” Steve blurted out, his words coming more from his heart than they were his head.

Bucky turned rapidly towards him, disapproval written all over him.

“Wha- Bucky c'mon.” Steve's words did little to erase the said disapproval. “People are laying down their lives with so much hope for so little. I got no right to do any less than them.” These words did have some affect. An effect of sympathy, rippling over Bucky's rigid self.

Steve put the final nail in. “Jim would want to be fighting on the right side.”

That sent poor Buck into a ruthless fight with himself. He pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head. He muttered under his breath, Steve only managed to catch the words that would make mothers cover the ears of their children. In the end, Bucky seemed to give in.

“Rrgh, Fine!” Bucky shouted. “We'll help you put Steve on the throne.” Well if that wasn't the most terrifying thing Steve had ever heard. “But how? Because I'm not agreeing to this if we're just gonna run headfirst into immediate death! And unless you have a magic spell just sitting in your cottage, I don't see how we can possibly even talk about overthrowing the king. I may be good with a bow and a sword but I don't know the first thing about strategy and war and-“.

Something else came to Steve's attention, something more prevalent at the moment. Something that set off every new enhanced sense that Steve had.

He heard the pounding of hooves, leaving dust behind them, dirtying the probably fine and golden carriage they were pulling.

"Shhh!!" Steve said straining his ears so he could pinpoint where the sound was coming from. A trail nearby?

"-I'm starting to agree with you, and your shushing me-?"

"Shhh!!!" Steve repeated the action, his head raced around looking for something amiss. "Don't you hear that?" He whispered.

"I don't hear anything--"

"It must be his new senses!" Dr. Erskine caught off Bucky, "We always theorized he might be able to hear a little better than the average man."

"We-? Nevermind, but what do you hear?" Bucky asked.

"Well if you would all shut up for one minute I might be able to know!" Steve said sourly. He rubbed his temples. "I think it's coming from over there." He pointed to his right.

"There's nothing over there but- But that's the trail that leads to the village... and to the castle."

an unspoken grim spawned over the three men. They wordlessly took off in the same direction, eager to find out all the commotion. Once they got closer they could hear the chatter of hundreds of people, all the voices varying in exclamations and shouts of fear and surprise. It sounded like the people knew no more than they did. Soon the tall pine wood trees were replaced cottages and buildings that teetered from their stone foundation. They soon found themselves at one of the outlying cottages. Bucky stopped and picked a gray robe from a thin wire hanging from two trees, the sun effectively drying the clothing.

"We can't let anyone recognize us." Bucky answered Steve's unspoken question.

Steve grumbled. Stealing was wrong, these were innocent people's clothing they had paid for. But maybe... for the greater good ... and if they returned them.

"Fine but we're borrowing, don't go strolling through the mud." So all three had a cloak that subsequently disguised them from anyone who didn't look too hard.

A few more minutes of walking, and they were in the streets. Steve saw, to his fright, the guards. Royal knights. Steve felt fury as they pushed the people around, leading them to somewhere. Bucky, Erskine and Steve watched from the side, not wanting to be drawn into something with no way out. The knights may have swords but Steve and Bucky had experience. They knew these streets like the back of their hands. It took a little while but they managed to follow the multitude undetected by the growling, barbaric guards. Steve's heart ached for the scared families who had just been thrust out of their normal safe routine with no

warning. Were they in trouble? What had they done? Steve thought maybe he could hear they're thoughts, maybe that was another one of his abilities. But that wasn't the case, he could simply just see the words on the fear filled faces. He could see the questions from the shaking of their knees.

Hidden by the shadows came with pros and cons, they were completely covered by the population of people but could not see overhead, the source that they were headed to.

"I don't like this." Bucky stated the obvious words with even more obvious questions behind them. Should we go? Do we really want to stay?

"We need to find out what's going on. Those were royal guards, Buck. The King hasn't paid a visit to our village... ever. Why would he do it now?"

Bucky glanced at Dr. Erskine who was looking more sick by the minute. "I think I may know."

It came to Steve just a few seconds late. His eyes widened as realized where they were going. The center of the village. Where the large 8 foot column stuck out like a flower in a bed of weeds. Where the shield back at Dr. Erskine's home had resided for years was now replaced by something far more sinister.

The king.

Steve hadn't ever met the king, hasn't ever even seen him before this moment. But he had heard. He heard about the way he would turn his head towards the troops and people forced to fight for him. He heard about the absolute absence of mercy when it came to the smallest of grievances.

When Steve saw the pure indifference in the king's eyes as he watched the frightened crowd and he knew everything he had heard was true.

The crowd was numberless, immeasurable, it made the amass crowd at the competition look like nothing in comparison to everyone here. This must be everyone in this village. Steve didn't even know that this many people lived here, he guessed it really could be true what the elders said about this village. That it wasn't always a village at all but a gigantic city that stood out on every map. People came in from every corner, every nook and cranny was filled. Once the knights were sure that no one else could possibly get any closer they took to surrounding The People, creating an invisible trap. Then there were the ones surrounding the king and facing the people, creating an invisible barrier.

"Won't go anywhere without leagues of puppets to protect him at any time." Dr. Erskine commented. "Coward, he is."

Steve agreed.

The King raised his hand, commanding everyone to be silent. The people obeyed but could not help the hushed whispers that rushed together.

The king spoke with swords on his tongue and poison on his words. "I suppose you're wondering why I decided to grace you with my presence. Me, King Johann Smidt. The Red Skull." He said, almost bored.

Red Skull looked at the crack in the smooth stone, where the Shield used to be. He seemed very upset over it, his gloved hands clenching together with thinly veiled anger.

"Well, you see. It has a small bit to do with the fact that you have all committed treason."

The crowd erupted, confusion and shock was everywhere. In every child confused by the accusing words and every grown man and woman raking through everything they've ever done to find out what he could possibly mean.

King Red Skull was delighted by this. "You see," he spoke over them with ego and pride. "26 years ago, almost 27 I passed a law. No one and I mean no one! Should lay a finger on this podium! Should not come near the shield!"

"Did you know that the punishment for touching this shield... is death? Banishment? Execution?" The king seemed to grow in size with every word. The crowd shrank wondering if their eyes were playing tricks on them or if the knights actually were tightening their grip on their swords.

"Did you really think you would get away with this? As soon as this shield moved, in less than 10 hours I got a letter. Such mutiny. Don't you know how I got this name, this moniker, The Red Skull. I should arrest you all!" Some started to cry and hug each other. Was it really going to end so suddenly?

Steve panicked. This was his fault. If he had never touched the Shield none of this would have happened! "We have to do something--"

But he was caught off by Red skull. "But," he said with a smile. "This can easily be resolved. You have three days to bring me the Shield and the sorry soul who has it." Steve felt like prey and there was a thousand arrows pointed at him. "If you fail this simple task... then I'm afraid, this village will burn."

A dreary gloom caught hold in the throats of the citizens. No one could speak, no one could breathe.

The Wicked King fixed his gloves. "Well now if that'll be all--"

"Excuse me?"

King Smidt was caught off guard, the confusion masking his face was a deep contrast. It only lasted for a moment but it did much to lessen Red Skull's image. A small crack in the stained glass image, allowing people to see through. People looked around, wondering who had either had enough stupidity or enough gall to think they're small whistle could peek through the resounding Gongs suppressing the people.

“Who said that?” Red Skull demanded, using an unbridled anger but it was too late. It only takes a little bit of the unexpected to fall even the most prepared man. There was quite a lot of the Unexpected here.

“Over here.” A lady said snapping her fingers twice above her head grasping everyone’s rapt attention. An older man behind her groaned deeply. A few people around her stepped away, as if she was something so powerful they wanted to give her strength. Steve’s head snapped to her and found that he couldn’t look away.

She was the same height as the average lady but she seemed to stand taller than the rest. She carried herself with confidence, her shoulders back, her nose tilted up, and her brown eyes unblinking and daring. Her silky brown hair curled and rolled off her shoulders, a simple red hat laying on her head. A beautiful dark blue just a little darker than the sky dress going down to her mid-thighs where she had stunning dark boots digging into the dirt. Her dress was subtle, casual and small jewels scattered over the magnificent dress seeming to fade in and out but sparkled everyone around her. Her red lips were turned in a subtle smirk, they seemed to be a stronger ability than any of the strength or speed that Steve had. You look at her and you just get one thought stuck in your head rendering you completely numb and useless. ‘I have something you don’t, and I’m excited to use it.’

Steve’s heart leaped in a way that was unfamiliar to him, was this alarm? Fear? Or something else entirely? T-This had to be a princess, Steve thought surely.

It was late fall, why was Steve so hot?

Johann’s mouth opened and closed in what one would think was quite an un-kingly thing to do. He tried to recover. “And who are you?”

“Margaret Carter, Your Highness.” She said. Her voice was strange, Steve didn’t think she was from here with her accent. But where could someone like her come from. “My friend’s call me Peggy.”

“Peggy,” the man behind her reprimanded.

“Oh calm down, Mr. Phillips.”

Dr. Erskine straightened in recognition.

The king narrowed his eyes. “Well, Peggy-“

“Ms. Carter.”

“-Tell me Honestly, What makes you think I won’t just arrest you right now.” The knight closest to her stepped forward. She looked at him quite unimpressed.

“Oh well,” She looked at her nails. “You might want to take in consideration that the Kingdom of Didymos... Yes, they probably want their lead War Strategist back.”

Steve could’ve sworn that he saw The king pale a little bit. Steve was just confused, War Strategist? Steve had never heard of a woman having such a high rank and job. Ms. Carter

must be one in a thousand.

Now Peggy was full on smirking. “Ah, yes. Now that I have your attention, I have a few problems with your whole...” she gestured to everything around her. “Performance.” She mocked. The man behind her, Apparently Mr. Phillips looked a little bit like he wanted to die. Steve worried profusely about the man. Peggy Carter evidently did not because she continued to speak.

“I know you’ve been King for a while now, so you must know about the set of laws that the first king of this kingdom, 300 years ago, put in place with the King of Didymos and the King of Myrminki as guideline of how they would rule and their descendants would rule. Though seeing how you are not apart of that bloodline, you don’t?” By the tone of her voice, Peggy suspected he did not.

“Excuse me? How dare-”

“That’s a no. You see those laws are the foundation of this kingdom and I’m afraid you just violated them.” Some of the adults around her starting to look relieved, maybe even a little happy. “Let’s see, you’ve marched knights into a peaceful territory, broken into the homes of your people, herding the people here like sheep and then with no grounds for accusation you’ve threatened them. The first law was protection of the people.” She listed off become more furious by the second. “I doubt Didymos’s King will be happy to hear about this, A- And what did you say about news? It took ten hours for you to hear?” She spat out. “Won’t take long for Myrminki to find out.”

She’s amazing. Steve thought, his brain thinking of a plan that his mind didn’t even consider yet.

He remembered what Bucky was saying from earlier. Dr. Erskine, Bucky, Steve... none of them have any experience with anything that the Doctor is trying to propose. If Steve wants to make a difference... he needs someone who does.

Someone like Peggy Carter.

The King’s face turned red, his nose twitched with frustration. But then he smiled showing his disheveled yellow teeth. “Ah yes, you -surprisingly- have a point. Though I get the feeling, and do correct me, that you’re not here on official duty.” Peggy frowned. “Seeing as I got no word of a lead war strategist coming, you seem dreadfully unprepared. You’re unarmed, you don’t even have a sword.” He verbally attacked. “Unless you’re hiding one underneath that oh so pretty dress.” Peggy bristled but he continued. “So if you’re not here on call of Didymos’s King... you must be here just... visiting? I’m afraid a visit doesn’t warrant you any rank in my kingdom so,” he waved his hands gesturing to the knights who immediately began to circle up. “You’ll have nowhere to go when I lock this sad excuse of city down.”

“What!?” Peggy yelled, Mr Phillips mirroring her expression. The sound rose again from where it laid dormant in the crowds throats. The bit of courage from Peggy had given them all a bit of courage.

“That means!” Red skull yelled over the crowd. “That means that no one goes in our out!” That’s when the knights began to destroy a carriage, furthering the fear that was nailing itself in every child, woman and man’s heart. “No carriages enter, no carriages leave! No letter will be sent and no letter will be received.” He glared at Peggy directly for the last part. “If you try to run, you will make it no further than the knights at every exit. Surrounding this village.” People were starting to run away now that the knights had other terrible things to do. It was a frantic storm of people, parents carried their children in an attempt at avoiding being trampled.

Bucky tugged on Steve’s arm. “We have to get out of here before we’re completely trapped!” He tugged again. “C'mon let’s go.” He urged, Dr Erskine sharing the same incentive.

But Steve couldn’t. Not yet. None of this could be possible if Peggy Carter wasn’t on their side. “Not yet!” On a spur Steve took off through the middle of the crowd, making his own way through the bustling herd.

“What are you doing?!” Bucky’s voice was muted by the trampling feet and the chorus of hundreds of panicked people.

Steve scanned, looking for the mistress with the blue dress and rose red hat. The mass of people shadowed every corner of Steve’s vision. But at the very last second his eyes saw the flash of red and blue and he locked onto her. Her back was turned to him she was standing on the side, avoiding the chaos and talking in a tense matter to Mr. Phillips.

Steve clutched the dirt colored cloak a little tighter. He worried that someone might recognize him, as Steve or as the man who pulled the Shield.

No! Peggy was going to leave any minute. She was heading down a relatively vacant alley, this was Steve’s chance.

To recruit her. Yeah that’s right.

“Ms. Carter!” Steve said loudly, not wanting to arouse too much attention. She turned to meet him with raised eyebrows and Steve discovered that his plan didn’t go any farther than this.

“I uh... hello.” Steve cursed every magical event that brought him here. Including himself.

“Hello.” Ms Carter said back, silently urging him to continue.

“That-That was impressive. What you did. Back there.” Peggy looked thoughtful as if she thought maybe she could’ve done better. Steve didn’t doubt it.

“Well, thank you. That’s very kind. I have to be going-“

“Eh- Wait!” Steve said slowly regaining the ability to speak. “You said you’re a War Strategist back there,” She did do that, right? “I uh, think you could help me. Us.”

“I can help a lot of people, what’s your point-“

“I have the Shield!” Steve blurted out. “I was the one who uh, lifted it. Out of the stone.” What in all of Thaumazo is wrong with him??

Peggy blinked, honestly taken aback, but like anyone with strength she rolled off the shock like she did the punches. “Well then I’m sure you have a lot on your plate. Restoring Katepano and whatnot.”

That’s when Chester Phillips decided to join in the conversation. “Carter, who is this?” He said with a gravelly voice, one that showed obvious years of fighting and commanding respect.

“Steve Rogers.” He introduced.

“Well, Steve Rogers, we have a lot to do so we’ll be on our way.”

“Hold on, Mr Phillips, I want to hear what he has to say.”

“It’s Colonel Phillips, Carter and we can’t talk to every young man who wishes to be your suitor-“

“Chester!” Said a voice from behind Steve. Steve looked behind him to see that Bucky and Dr. Erskine had followed him through the storm. It was Dr. Erskine, who came up to the other older man with a big smile.

Colonel Phillips looked shocked. “Erskine! I haven’t seen you in years.” He then glanced at Steve with narrow eyes. “You’re with this fellow?” He asked with an accusatory finger at Steve.

“That I am.” Colonel Phillips visibly relaxed.

“Oh yeah,” Bucky said with his arms crossed. If he kept them like that they would soon freeze in that position forever. “This is a nice reunion, but the King of Katepano is locking us in the village!” Bucky was always better at being the voice of reason.

“Where would we go?” Peggy asked.

“Who says we’re going?” The Colonel objected.

“We would just be going to my cottage, Phillips.” Dr. Erskine encouraged.

“-And we need to go soon if we’re going to get out before the knights circle every exit.” Steve said feeling a strange sense of authority. He’s always looked up to people and now he feels like he can look them in the eye. Maybe that was all he needed to stand up.

Peggy tapped her foot, bouncing along with it as the options and variables tumbled around her brain with a speedy force. “...alright, We’ll go. I don’t want to be stuck here so that means I’m not going to. But I retain the right to leave your cottage any time I please.”

“Of course.” Steve said. That was the easy part. Now they had to beat the knights-oh and return the cloaks they had borrowed.

With no time to lose and no time they could gain they took off with great speed, Peggy leading ahead, her dress did nothing to slow her down. As if anything would. Bucky lead all of them, holding his hand up when they needed to stop accordingly. There were a few close calls, Steve thought for sure that the knights would hear the hammering of his heart against his chest. But they made it to the home with the cloaks without any disturbance. Steve reminded them they needed to return them, receiving puzzled looks from Peggy and Colonel Phillips, and they wasted no time getting to Dr. Erskine's home.

"This isn't that far from the city," Peggy said. Dr. Erskine just smiled mischievously and told her that neither the Knights nor the King would find this place. Steve knew better than to not trust him.

Colonel Phillips was quite an interesting person, Steve thought watching the man stare deadpan at the steaming tea. Dr. Erskine really loved tea.

"Got anything stronger?" The Colonel grumbled.

It only took a few questions for the cautious nervousness to disperse as they welcomed in friendly conversation. Peggy told them all about Colonel Phillips desperate letter asking for her help, and how she had managed to rise in the ranks. Steve was taught to respect women and men, old and young alike by his surrogate mother but he knew that others did not have the same teachings. It was hard for women to rise in the ranks, especially remaining without a suitor, but Peggy had managed to do the impossible and become her own mistress. Her brother had also supported her but he died in the service of the King of Didymos. Service was actually how Colonel Phillips and Ms Carter met. Colonel was overseeing a negotiations between their two kingdoms and they hit it off pretty well as they shared many of the same opinions, even though they were very different people. Peggy was a young woman and confident in her ability and held a wit that no tongue could best and Phillips was decidedly more down to earth, serious, kind of person. Over the years, Phillips had settled in their towns but wrote to Peggy and less recently her brother, often.

Bucky smiled for what felt like the first time in years. Even though they had a rocky bit of a start with the whole threat of being oppressed and trapped hanging over their heads, Bucky actually got along pretty well with the two. That warmed Steve's heart as that would be very important for the loose plan forming in his mind.

"But enough about us." Colonel Phillips gruffly spoke. "I'm more curious about you" he pointed at Steve. "And that shield." Steve was expecting this but dreaded it all the same as he did not believe he had many answers.

"Ah, Well." Steve started, leaning forward in his seat, a little uncharacteristic for himself. "You... know the prophecy?" They nodded almost in sync. "Well, that was made by um..." he looked over to Dr. Erskine.

"The Ancient One."

“Er, right. Because she can look into the future.” Steve said slowly and he went on to explain the convoluted and hard to understand, events that brought them here. Steve told Peggy and Colonel Phillips about Bucky winning the event, Jim Moritz, the tiresome chase that lead them to the shield, the magical transformation and eventually meeting Dr. Erskine. Bucky mentioned a few points every now and then.

“And in this, Future that the sorceress saw, you’re the king? The King of Katepano?” Peggy clarified, her tone wasn’t aggressive or disbelieving, simply grasped with curiosity.

“Yep.” Steve breathed out, wondering where the days of sitting in the stands and finding odd jobs had gone.

Peggy mused. “I see, and you want my help because you know a barrel of nothing when it comes to overthrowing one of the three most powerful forces in Thaumazo.”

“Yep.” Steve desperately tried to widen the span of words his brain could cough out. It wasn’t going well.

Something in Peggy Carter hardened. Perhaps it was the many years talking back and asserting her position and power, or maybe it was the loss in her life that broke her down so she rise better, maybe even it was the grueling training she had received by the few that would turn her way. Truth was... it was a bit of all three.

“Come with me. Just you.” Peggy demanded getting to her feet and walking out the door. Steve humbly followed her after giving an estranged look at Buck. He was surprised when he saw the lady climbing the side of Erskine’s home. Peggy was not much for the ‘Lady-like’ values that society pressed on to people.

“Stop squaking around like a chicken with no head and follow me.” Steve did and soon they were both on the roof. Peggy had only just gotten to their village with her luggage so she had changed into a dress much easier to move in. Colonel Phillips wasn’t as lucky.

She was looking for something, Steve noted as he watched Ms Carter scan the land and sky. Her movements were precise, sure, everything that Steve never was. Finally she found it and pointed to a dim, barely seen, orange hue, originating from far from where they were. The aura was surrounded by the evening, the night sky, the aftermath of a sunset.

“Do you see that, Rogers?” He nodded. “That, right there, is the beauty of war. The light is coming from the fire of the front lines where a multitude of Men are fighting for their lives. Among them are men who are there for power, rank, gold, and fame. Among them are the ones in which life has been unfair to them. Among them are fathers and sons whose families are not among them, crying and pleading that their loved ones would not be among them. All of this is a terrible slight on our history and that’s not even the worst part. It’s among them. ‘Them’ is coming from both sides forcing to fight, injure and murder those among them but just on a different land. There’s no clear cut, good or evil, Steve. There’s no one answer to all of your problems and the kingdoms problems. There just isn’t. If I help you, you will become

King. Now that I've enlightened you to the smallest sliver of war, as King, what will you do for those among them?"

Steve gaped, all function for anything besides tremble over the sheer weight of her words. He looked at the far away terror lighting up the night sky.

She's right, Steve thought. There isn't one answer to all their problems but there isn't one person either. There's a million people out there in Thaumazo and there's even more beyond that. People who are far more genius than Steve and some that are far more skilled and talented. If every single person had one solution to one problem than you would have a million answers to a million questions. A stone doesn't make a wall, dozens of stones do with something connecting them together. Something or someone that could hold it all together. If people would just work together and do... all that they can.

Steve looked back at Peggy. His blue eyes bore into her dark oak brown ones. "I'll do... Everything I can."

Peggy stared at him, the utter definition of blank resting on her. You could have seen her rob the king and have no idea that this lady would ever do such a thing.

Acceptance slowly rose to Peggy's heart and showed on her expression. She smiled. Steve thought it was a beautiful smile. Small, mischievous and genuine. "Then let's get started."

Chapter End Notes

Anything seem out of character? Please let me know! I love feedback and comments.

First of Many

Chapter Summary

Steve and crew launch their attack on the Crow Center

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been so long, guys. School's a jerk. But I'm back YAY!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They worked like dogs. Dr. Erskine had a plethora of supplies, maps, and books, to Peggy's delight. Peggy could feel a shuddering breath in her lungs. This was by all means insane. This would go down in history -if they would do it right. Peggy wasn't worried about being right at this point. She's met the 'Great' Red skull in person. She's met the sheepish man who lifted the star spangled Shield. Steve would need to study and work, he's a commoner and albeit a little clueless about what's to come but... he's got a good heart.

He's also ridiculously strong now. That tends to help.

Yesterday night she told Steve, "If I help you, you will become King." Friends and family had told Peggy she tended to bite off a bit more than she can chew. That was an understatement. She had just volunteered to fight a dragon with a kitchen knife.

They were vastly outnumbered. Even in a war within itself, the kingdom of Katepano could fight off invaders. Though on the other hand... They had a wizard, a retired war general, a war strategist, a championship winner, and man with the strength of ten men with a magic shield.

Perhaps she had a little more than just a kitchen knife.

"What's this over here?" Steve asked pointing to a small part on the map. Scrolls were unfurled and scattered everywhere, good thing Dr. Erskine didn't seem to mind. Peggy spent about a good hour explaining how to read maps to Bucky and Steve, a long and tiresome process, but quick learners compared to some students Peggy has had the pleasure of meeting. They were trying to figure out the best course of action. Time was of the essence. Every second that passed was another sword swinging through the air.

Peggy's eyes turned to where Steve had pointed. It was a good observation. The construct had expert security but nothing compared to the castle, it was on the edge of the map and the

edge of the Kingdom but very close to the castle. It was fortified mainly based on position as the entire building actually hung off the side of the cliff. You couldn't attack something that was a 100 feet above you from the sea.

"That's where they keep the crows." Colonel Phillips said. Peggy hadn't yet gotten his opinion on this whole ordeal. Peggy could guess but say nothing with a perfect accuracy. The mind of Colonel Phillips was not something Peggy wished to study. She would go mad.

"Crows?" Bucky asked incredulously. "Why would they need Crows?"

"For delivering letters." Dr Erskine informed the brown haired man. "Every letter in the Great Three Kingdoms goes through that center. It's run by the Crow Lord."

The men continued to talk in the room but Peggy had something crazy forming in the center of her thoughts. War is won with men and numbers. People and weapons. The only way to get those things is through influence and communication. If you controlled the flow of information, you controlled the flow of assets and supplies. You would have the power to try to bring some to the truth.

"That's it!" Peggy shouted, silencing the startled boys. "We'll take the Crows!"

Colonel Phillips furrowed his brow. "Why in the land-?"

"Think about it, Chester, we would control the news. We could tell everyone in the whole kingdom about Steve Rogers." Peggy chuckled, amused at the way Steve paled humbly.

"That's a bold move, Carter, I think I'd rather remain in the shadows for a while. Lay low." Colonel Phillips countered.

"Maybe we could do both." Bucky offered. "Take the Crow Center but remain anonymous and hidden." The silence was filled with strategizing thoughts.

"Who's the Crow Lord?" Steve asked.

"Well I'm not exactly sure what his real name is, but he goes by 'Dum Dum Dugan'". Peggy said. "I've never met him but surely someone with a nickname like that would be friendly."

"Alright, then." Erskine said. "Assuming the five of us can break into this place and get Dugan onto our side, what will we do with the letters?"

"We can perhaps catch anything new about the war. Check anything with Red Skull's seal." Steve offered.

"That's a good idea, and I can get word to some of my contacts -your contacts too Phillips."

The said man shook his head. "This is assuming we even get ten feet of those crows."

"Oh we'll get in." Steve said with a firm determination. "I've got an idea."

Steve asked multiple questions about the structure, he wanted to know everything, where it was, what was around it, how many guards, how tall was the building, Everything! Peggy supplied him with everything he wanted to know but still could not get a sliver of an idea of what he was planning. Apparently Bucky did as he started asking questions too. Peggy could have even guessed they were getting excited about it.

“What are you two getting at?” Colonel Phillips finally said, exasperated beyond belief.

“You really wanna base off our success on a merchant story Steve?” Bucky asked chuckling at the absurdity of the situation.

“Well, c’mon, it’s not that crazy! I-It’s possible.” Steve defended.

“If one of you doesn’t spit it out, I’m gonna go mad.” Peggy deadpanned.

“Ok, so there’s this... tale.” Steve said. “That we heard once.”

“...Alright?”

“-And in this tale, it’s about attacking a fort. The hero of the story, he climbs up the back of the fort and crashes through the window. Then the army comes and attacks the front. Surrounding the enemy.”

“But we don’t have an army.” Dr. Erskine said.

“Well we wouldn’t be following the story exactly-“

“This is the most insane thing I’ve ever had the pleasure of conducting.” Peggy breathed, entranced by an adrenaline fueled wonder. “Rogers, I love your idea, tell me more.” She smiled at him, a weird sort of flutter in her heart. Or her stomach, Was she getting Poorly? Perhaps she should get more rest.

So Steve did, he rambled and went on and Peggy listened with such interest. They painted a picture of their plan, they sketched the basics and little by little added more detail until the glorious scene was portrayed clearly for them all to see.

And soon for the world to see.

Steve wished he had a bag of some sort, brown, maybe made of paper. Something to help his breathing. Alas such a thing didn’t seem to exist. Everyone had taken to their stations. Peggy and Bucky tried for hours to improve his sword fighting skills -and he wasn’t terrible! He just wasn’t... great.

The Retired General and the Mangy Wizard were plotting in the corner of the room. Smoothing out the last details of their portion of the plan. Steve, Bucky and Peggy’s part was pretty simple. Though they knew that simple didn’t always mean easy.

They were steadily approaching the battle. Steve didn't know if he preferred knowing about a battle, when and where, or if he preferred it to be unexpected. Everything bliss and pleasant until that moment.

"Are you ready?" Peggy had asked him. He proceeded to make a sound not dissimilar to a pregnant goat. She had smiled, attempting to be caring, but Steve could see right through her perfect lips. She was worried too, maybe even more so, she had the experience to draw the potential outcomes with multiple colors and skills, while Steve was drawing in the sand.

"You think we can pull this off?" Steve asked Bucky as they were less than minutes from the desired and loathed position.

Bucky let out a deep breath. "Honestly? I think we have a worse chance than finding gold underneath our cottage."

"....I guess we should grab the shovels then, huh."

Both brothers laughed as loud as they could with the impending stare of Peggy at the back of their heads. Worse than a sword, she was.

"But seriously..." Oh no, Bucky was never serious. "I mean we're taught that anything can be overcome. So they would only be able to teach us that if they had been able to get over whatever wall they were facing in their lives." Bucky looked away from his dirt stained hands to look at Steve. "Everything that happened before has led us to what is happening now. That's the flow of events, the flow of time. And I don't think we were led here to fail."

Bucky clapped Steve on the back and left him with that. Left him with the idea of trusting fate. How could you trust fate? It's not a person, it doesn't have a conscience, it's not good or bad, it's just is.

But Steve knew Bucky and Peggy could be trusted just like he could trust that water makes things wet and fire makes things burn -and he knows Peggy and Bucky trust him. He wouldn't let them down.

They arrived.

It seemed they were constantly changing transportation. They had horses for as long as they could until the landscape became too rocky for them, so they had to walk. To get to the backside of the Crow Center they would have to jump up and over rocks of all different sizes, lugging their weapons and rope with them all the way. The ground crumbled underneath tempting them into making a mistake and falling into the rapids below. It was hard, but would have been much harder a month ago. It was like Steve was made for this. He was sturdy but flexible. He was strong enough to lift his comrades but had enough control to not crush their hands. Being taller and able to walk and breathe also helped.

"Hey!" Bucky called Peggy, their guide. "How much further?"

"Shouldn't be too much more." She shouted back. "I see it!"

Determination pulled them forward and soon Steve saw it too. Hanging off the cliff, a good portion having a few feet of dirt underneath it and then just empty space. Vines hung down, twisted and misshapen, resembling nooses just waiting for the guilty to reach them.

“Alright.” Peggy said. “You ready Steve?” She asked for the second time tonight. He nodded. “Then start climbing.”

Steve put the palm of his hands on the dirt, coarse and gravelly, and dug his fingers in. It would hold him. He began to climb, ascending the cliff.

The wind was unbearable. It felt like a thousand people who were taken by the waves were screaming at him, crying, dragging him down. It took everything Steve had to hoist himself up one foot and took him everything he thought he used to get himself up more. The rope he was carrying on his back dug into his skin. The magic shield on his back kept him dry.

“Am I close?” Steve shouted down.

“You’re so close Steve, Just keep going.” Peggy shouted from the bottom. Truth was he still had a while to go but she knew keeping his morale up would be critical. Bucky and Peggy shared a look ecstatic that they had found something in common that they enjoyed. Making fun of Steve.

“I am?”

“Just Go!”

Steve climbed and climbed and Peggy’s mouth dropped and dropped. It wasn’t long until he made it to the top of the dirt escapade. He would then have to dangle and just rely on the sticky moss and vine and his strength. The man quirked his neck backward looking for the strongest vine to grasp. It was the dead of night -soon to become literal if he didn’t get this absolutely perfect. Steve checked his left foothold and then he swung his right side. He barely manages to grab the dirt, he pushed his back to the side as far as he could, a fruitless attempt to calm his racing heart. At least now he had a better chance.

“Steve!” Peggy and Bucky simultaneously shouted.

“It’s fine!”

“It doesn’t look fine, Steve!”

“Be careful, Rogers!”

Steve let out a laugh as his head dropped. That was a mistake, he was utterly reminded just much he would be dead if he fell.

But he’s not gonna fall. Not gonna fall. Not gonna fall. Not gonna fall...

“Alright...” Steve got ready, put a little bend into his knees, his eyes locked onto a vine, multiple terrible outcomes running through his brain.

Ready.... ready... he leaped!

He soared through the air, his arms outstretched. His hands met the vine and Steve slides down before he tightens his hold, painfully bouncing the little food Dr. Erskine had shoved into his mouth. The wind and waves seemed to calm in respect. With shut eyes Steve regained his wit and continued.

He swung and jumped. Swung and jumped. A simple routine but it strained his muscles badly. His heart leapt for joy when he finally could feel stone on his finger tips. He had made it to the Crow center. He would just have to climb an exhausting 40 feet up. The structure was well made. Not much for anything to stand on or to grab. Getting an idea, albeit crazy, Steve pulled the shield from where it laid on his back. Securing his hold on the side he pulled his arm back and brought the shield into the stone. It cracked in two, resembling the crevice of the prophecy column. He could use that to get himself up, Steve wished he had thought of it before he had climbed the 50 feet of dirt below him.

Before he started he grabbed one of the two ropes he had been carrying, he fumbled through but managed to tie a tight knot around a stone. He then let the rope fall down and down until it landed at Bucky's feet. Now they could make the journey as well.

Steve had never felt like such a hero before when he got to the top window. The first step on a long journey is always the hardest, especially when the first step is to climb the unclimbable. On this night, Steve made one impossible thing possible. All he had to do was a few more.

Dum Dum Dugan was his name and he loved every bit of it. It was the highlight of his miserable job. He had ginger hair on the top of his head and a beautiful mustache. Hmm, perhaps that was really the highlight of his job. He was the crow lord. Passed down by his father, who got it from his father, who actually was just a sheep herder.

Dugan sighed, the air going through his tall broad (and hairy) chest. 20 years he had been doing this and he was bored out of his mind. It wouldn't be too bad if it weren't for that king, the 'Red Skull' as he called himself made his life a nightmare and had no clause to tradition.

He wanted this, he wanted that. Hey, Dugan wanted a private lake and a couple rounds of beers but did he get what he wanted? Nope. Dugan would also like to have any other job. Particularly one where he could smash a few heads together. Wield a sword.

Dugan sat at his desk, his feet on the table, counting the bricks in the wall for the 98th time. The crows sat in their barred cages, stacked up on each other. If Dugan had a say he would much rather have an open enclosure. Maybe then he'd get some sleep at night. Maybe then he wouldn't have dreams of the constant, annoying, birds.

Why doesn't Dugan just leave? Well he can't. There are laws against that and the knights have orders to chase him down if he ran. Dum Dum couldn't even believe they thought he actually might try.

This wasn't a job. It was a prison.

"Just you wait, once I get a sword of my own..." Dugan mumbled to himself.

"Just you wait."

It was then that he heard the rushed whispers and the clanking of boots. Someone was here.

"What took you so long, Buck?" Steve poked at his brother as he helped him into the tower.

"Please," Bucky said. "I was just enjoying the view."

"Even though your banter is quite entertaining, boys, we have much to do." Peggy said, duty focused as always. "Keep your voices and heads down. I'll lead us to the Crow room and we'll hopefully make it without detection." She ordered.

"Yes, sir." Bucky said gruffly and they took off. Peggy alerted them to everything, where and when the knights were rounding the halls, which way to go. This was the easy part.

Someone should have told Steve not to get too comfortable when you're sneaking through the halls and being caught would mean a hanging. He ran a little too fast and bumped into Peggy who knocked into some decor on the wall. Both of them furiously fumbled to muffle what was the stagnant desk.

"Watch where you're going, Rogers!" Peggy whisper commanded. Steve blushed and hoped his previous bravery would overlook his innocent clumsiness now.

"I think we're good." Bucky muttered, looking around to see if anyone heard them.

It was then that all three adventurers heard a loud crash! It vibrated through the stone walls and the floor. The glowing flames atop the torches seemed to flicker in reaction. Like an audience on the edge of their seats.

"Was that?" Steve asked his eyes widening as he looked all around. Everything seemed so much more interesting all of the sudden.

"It was." Peggy confirmed with a smile. Colonel Phillips and Dr. Erskine's part of the plan. The distraction. Colonel Phillips strategist mind and Dr. Erskine's magic combined they had the force of a small army. The guards would overtake them soon, but by then they would be too late.

"Let's go!" Peggy shouted, letting her voice fly carelessly since no one would pay them any mind with the brutal attack on the front.

They ran and ran down the stairs blissfully unaware that they had a curious follower who had just alerted the guards.

Steve had seen nothing like the crow room. It was massive, huge, gigantic. If Steve knew any more words for big he would use them because there had to be hundreds of crows lining the walls in their cages ready to be of service when required. The moonlight shone above them as there was no ceiling. The moon shone down and the crows looked up longing to spread their wings.

The three could only take a moment to take in the view before there was a knock on the open door.

“Excuse me, but you don’t look like you quite belong here.” Said a man sporting ginger hair and quite a lawn on the lip. The fur on the man’s brow was quirked up. He seemed more pleasantly surprised than anything.

Steve was feeling very redhanded.

“I’m afraid that that’s not gonna fly very well over those knights in shining armor.”

“Well it’ll fly over great if they didnt know.” Steve humbly offered. A banging on the second door, over in the corner turned everyone’s heads.

Peggy and Bucky sprang into action, pushing a large desk into the door, locking them in and leaving Steve to fend for himself.

“I’m afraid that’s not an option, son.” The man said.

Something clicked for Steve. “You’re Dum Dum Dugan.”

“That I am. You heard of me?” He seemed delighted at this as he raised his fists into a fighting position.

Something about the aura of the situation gave Steve a little spry in his step. A trial, a challenge, the energy of battling for something. With a confidence and a rigor Steve mirrored Dugan’s stance.

“Oh yeah. All good things.” With that Steve took a lunge swinging his right fist at Dugan, Dugan ducked and tried to force Steve backwards as he wrapped his arms around his waist.. If Steve wasn’t taken off guard he wouldn’t have budged a bit, but the move was so brash and daring that his opponent managed to push him back quite a few feet.

Obviously though, Dugan expected to be able to push him further. “You’re a sturdy one, aren’t you?”

“I’m pretty strong too.” And with that Steve grabbed Dugan by the shoulders and tossed him up high and brutally let him fall down to the stone.

Dugan sluggishly turned so he was laying with his back.

“You...got me...”

Steve smiled smugly at the man. He sincerely believed that this guy wasn't so bad. He was just too peppy. Honestly... this man was just doing his job.

"Let's talk." Steve knelt down at the broken man's side. "My name is Steve Rogers and I have this nifty shield." He gestured to the Shield still on his back. Dugan's eyes widened a bit. "Those doors aren't going to hold for long and so you're going to go out there and tell the guards this is all a big misunderstanding."

"... And if I don't?"

"Well you get to think about the first thing I said."

"You're Steve Rogers."

"After that."

"Oh. Oh."

"So we have a deal?"

"I'm gonna get fired." Dugan said to the air. "Deal."

So Steve helped Dum Dum Dugan to his feet, feeling the questioning stares the brunette's gave them. This could blow them all right out the window and into the rocky depths of the unforgiving ocean. With Steve's two friends on either side of the tall dark door, Dugan walked by both of them. The ginger stood tall withstanding the heavy hitting blows of Bucky and Peggy's negative energy towards him. Clearly he had experience on the short side of the stick, on the little side, the ones who aren't treated with the respect they deserve.

Bucky and Peggy had moved the desk that had been wedged into the door, you could see where the wood was breaking over the sheer strength from both sides.

"Open the door." Steve said standing tall.

They wordlessly did what they were told. Dugan walked out the door a nice smile on his face, he played the part well.

"Boys! What do you think you're doing here?" He subtly accused them.

"You called an alarm." The knight said in the front, skepticism in his voice. Steve blinked, he didn't think they could speak.

"Ah, yes... that." Dugan spoke like he knew that there were 3 armed fighters behind him and he had no weapon. It was not a desirable position.

"Well as long as you promise not to tell the big boss but I uh... may have jumped the arrow a bit. It looks like one of the crows' cages was too loose. It caused quite a ruckus here, and it might have gotten out."

Steve saw Peggy smirk at the lying. It wasn't bad.

“You know you’ll be punished for that.” The guard didn’t seem to be displeased at this.

“Yeah I know! Just get lost so I can go to bed.”

With the thought of their annoying Crow Lord facing reprimand the guards chuckled off, too much of a bounce in their step.

Dum Dum came back into the room, a blank and unreadable expression on his face. “Well that went well, didn’t it?” He said sarcastically.

“Tie him up.”

“Oh come on!”

—

That’s how they got a yapping ginger in the corner while they went forward with the rest of their plan. Peggy was readying the bird and trying not to murder Dugan who would not stop talking. Bucky was helping Steve with the letters. Steve had had hours to figure out what to write but that was all swept away.

The plan was simple. Peggy would send letters to her contacts across Thaumazo and Steve would use the rest of the pigeons to scatter a message across both sides of the war. While Red Skull worked with mystery and shadow, Steve Rogers would work with honesty and truth. People could speak out when they want without fear of losing their lives. People would be able to work with the royals and the knights instead of working for them.

“Still trying to figure out what to write?” Bucky said. Mindlessly messing with some of the blank scrolls before them.

“Yes.” Steve groaned throwing the quill onto the desk. “Why can’t Peggy or someone else write it?”

“Well they could, but it probably will be more... authentic coming from you.” Bucky spoke unsympathetically.

“I feel like a puppet talking. That’s not very ‘Authentic’ to me.”

Bucky rolled his eyes and yanked the scribbled on paper to his eyes. Steve nervously averted his eyes to see Peggy snap at Dugan again. They had tied this guy up and he seemed to be the one most happy. Steve had never seen Peggy get so fed up with someone before. It brought a warm smile to Steve’s face.

Finally Bucky was finished. “Well... It’s terrible.” Steve let his head drop into his hands. “But I think I see your problem.”

“Well, Master Scribe,” Steve poorly mocked. Like a mouse taunting a wolf. “What’s wrong with it.”

“Well there’s nothing wrong with the words, there’s something wrong with you.” Steve wished he had the energy to look offended.

Bucky amended quickly. “I mean you’re trying to sound like a warrior-king-fighter person. Just sound like yourself. As annoying you are, you are occasionally wise.”

Steve smiled. Maybe he was right. He feels like all of this responsibility has been dumped onto his shoulders trying to make him into something else. Like the coal and stone that miners relentlessly mine and crack and rip apart. He was a farm boy 2 weeks ago. Doing odd jobs to support himself and his brother. There wasn’t anyone in this game like him. They are all kings and royals and knights, but maybe they have enough of those. Maybe what they need is someone with their feet on the ground, a good head on their shoulders and an understanding of the citizens. After all, he was one before.

Steve remembered who he was writing for. He was writing a message for the people, a calling, he was writing a sign. So they could stand up and have a say in the kingdom they live in and the wars that they fight. Though he was also writing a warning to the ones on their burly thrones, that wasn’t what mattered when compared to the families in their straw houses.

“Huh.” Steve said his thoughts washing over him like a warm bath.

It was like his fingers were possessed. If you looked closely you could have seen the spark inside him as he grabbed one of the empty scrolls and Steve used what little education he received to write down the words in his heart and the logic in his brain. The handwriting was sloppy, barely readable, but the message was clear.

Now when Bucky read what he wrote, he smiled. Half proud of his little brother and the other half smug, knowing the effect this would have on the pompous bullies in their castles.

“I swear if you don’t shut your mouth I will shove the curtain fabric down it!” Peggy yelled from the other side of the room. Bucky Steve shared a look before bursting into laughter.

“Peggy get the potion thing!” Bucky yelled.

“Dr. Erskine said it was a portable spell!” She retorted, she seemed to be at the end of her patience. “Now cmon we have to move quickly. There’s no way that the Doctor and Colonel Phillips can keep the guards distracted for long. Any minute now they’ll sweep the castle.” Steve felt a little bit of shame for being so nonchalant but he shook it off. Focus on the mission.

They handed Peggy the scroll which she read as well. She then wrote it again with an impressed nod, fixing some of Steve’s grammatical errors, turning it from Chicken scratch to what looked like a royal contract. She rolled it up neatly

She then motioned for Steve to get a blue colored candle. “What is this for?” He asked.

“For any letter of importance, a wax seal is put upon it and a symbol pressed into it.” She answered pouring a bit of wax onto the scroll.

“But I don’t have a symbol.”

“Sure you do,” Bucky said. “You’re lugging it on your back.”

That’s right. The shield.

Steve had had quite a lot of feelings towards the magic metal shield. It was almost as if sometimes.... it had a mind of its own. That it knew where to go what to do. A sword was an extension of the body, but this shield was an extension of Steve’s heart. Steve was still realizing that the shield was a part of him now.

Peggy pressed a stamp into the wax, a circle and a star. Simple and inspiring.

“Alright, let’s see if we can do this without blowing anything up.” Peggy said making Steve’s heart race in panic and admiration.

Bucky slowly stepped behind Steve. At Steve’s confused glare he explained, “You have a magic shield, I’m not an idiot!” Steve pulled out his shield and held it in front of him strong. Peggy grabbed from her bag a green shimmering glass bottle. Inside was a clear liquid, the water-like substance had images between the bubbles swirling around like a tornado in a storm.

Peggy closed her eyes, Steve realized he’s never seen her not have an abundance of confidence doing anything. With subtly shaking hands she spoke out in a strange slithering language. She was speaking rhythmically, almost chanting as she shook the green bottle. A bright white light, similar to when Steve transformed, burst out of the bottle, making the entire room light up! The liquid light shone into Steve’s eyes and he had to look away but Peggy kept looking forward. She stopped speaking and then with an urgent speed she uncorked the bottle and poured it on the scroll. It sparked as the paper absorbed it, it got dryer as it got wetter with magic.

Nothing happened in the world for a moment.

“Did it work-?” There was a small POP! All eyes were turned to the paper stack next to the desk. What was a simple piece of paper was now an identical scroll holding the same message.

“It worked.” Bucky croaked out.

Peggy allowed herself a small surprised huff, she sounded delighted. But she quickly got back down to the mission. “Alright start arming the Crows with the letters, I still need to send word to my colleagues and somebody knock out that buffoon!” She said referring to the gasping Dugan who was shocked at the use of magic.

“Who are you guys!?” He said with a hitch in his voice.

“Uhhh...”. Steve sighed. He decided to throw a bone. “Look, do you like your boss?”

“I beg your pardon.”

“Red skull, the king, do you like him?”

“Does anybody?”

“Great, you don’t.” Steve put the shield on his back. “We’re the ones who are gonna end this civil war and dethrone him.” The bluntness smacked Dugan in the face. Soon a look that held no malicious threat was shone on his face.

“Interesting. Very interesting.”

“So maybe, you could help us.” Steve offered.

“What!?” Peggy said looking up from writing. Bucky muttered something like ‘Keep me out of this’ and kept letting crows go.

“We could use the help.” Steve reasoned, feeling sound with his plan. Dum Dum didn’t seem like such a bad guy. They need all the help they can get and a good fighter would never be taken for granted. “Besides if we leave him here he’ll just be arrested anyway.”

Peggy let her head fall into her hands.

“You know I think you should listen to this one,” Dugan said to Peggy. “He’s a wise one.”

“Fine, but I reserve the right to beat him into the floor at any moment.” She threatened. Steve beamed and untied Dugan.

“Help Bucky get those crows in the air.” Rogers ordered as he shook the man’s hand.

“Where are we sending them?” Dugan asked

“Everywhere.”

Howard Stark. A brilliant inventor and a mind that seemed foreign to his time. Farm boy was soon working in castles for kings and queens, wowing the crowds with the amazing weaponry and technical devices. He loved the cheers as he promised to make life easier for everyone.

Howard Stark knew that Peggy would love to punch his noggin every other day, but they were good friends as they knew the other didn’t mind bending the rules every now and then. He was still quite shocked when he learned of her abrupt venture to the tyrannical kingdom of Katepano. But she was one of the few women, heck, one of the few people that Howard respected. He would trust whatever she was doing was either important or reckless. Or maybe even both.

He was in the castle workshop when he heard a fluttering on the window. It was probably more demands and more deadlines, people who couldn’t understand his explosive art and

only wanted results. He groaned as he got to his feet, shuffling towards the window. There was a small red crow on the window, loyally holding a scroll for him.

A scroll with a symbol boring into red wax, resembling a hat with a flower at its crest. Peggy carter's symbol.

"What the..?" A mass of birds flew by the window, startling and pushing him backwards. He took the scroll from the crow quickly and looked out to investigate.

It was a frenzy. Crows were flying left and write dropping scrolls down like rain from a cloud. People were shouting gasping and finally reading the letters.

No doubt Peggy carter had something to do with this.

Then finally one of the servants shouted out.

"It's him! It's from the man who pulled the Shield! It's from Steve rogers!"

Oh dear.

Dear Thaumazo,

This is Steve Rogers, you may know me as the man who pulled the shield. The one who is the answer to the prophecy. But that's wrong.

Truth is we are all the answer to the prophecy.

This war has gone long enough. It needs to stop but that's not going to happen with those on the throne. Red Skull.

A king should be someone who puts hope in their people's hearts, not fear, that's what I want to be for the kingdom of Katepano. But It's not about what I want, it's about what the people want.

I know that some of you are afraid to stand up, because I won't lie, it is dangerous and some might even die.

But people are already dying for nothing.

So stand up. End this tyranny.

-Steve Rogers

Chapter End Notes

I will always accept good criticism!!

End Notes

Did anyone catch the Bucky Barnes?

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!