

Bugboy

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by [Tarlan](#)

Summary

Carson's retrovirus never returned him to fully human after the Iratus incident.

Notes

Written for:

mcsheplets 202: Bug

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trope_bingo prompt: character in distress

For Arwenoak as a small thank you for all the wonderful comments!

The patch of blue skin on his arm never went away entirely despite Carson's retrovirus, made from the Iratus eggs he had collected while still barely cognizant of being human. He still remembered the cave, and the sense of family, of belonging. It had reversed most of the mutation, making him appear outwardly human once more but John knew it was what couldn't be seen that worried some elements within the I.O.A. and the military on Earth. In certain lights his skin did still retain the slightest blue sheen, and his skin was always a little drier these days, though no longer covered in scales, fortunately.

His eyes looked normal at first glance. They were no longer slitted like an Iratus bug, but the gold flecks were more golden and John could see further into the infra-red spectrum, beyond the normal human range. If anyone called him on his acute vision he offered a flippant remark about eating lots of carrots as a kid, but he could see a little unease in those who had been here when he was mutated. He'd seen the security feeds from those dark days so he knew what had them all a little on edge.

When Rodney had a panic attack partway up an almost vertical, rocky incline, he never even thought about it as he scrabbled down to reach him, hands and feet finding holds in the rock without conscious thought. It took several minutes to get Rodney to open his eyes and focus solely on him, and several more to slowly guide Rodney to the top, pointing out each individual handhold and giving the encouragement Rodney needed after taking a little of the weight from his backpack. When they were close to the top Ronon reached down and hauled 'the little man' up the rest of the way, and John followed quickly, dropping to his knees beside Rodney to check on him.

It took him a moment to notice the silence from Ronon and Teyla, looking up to see them watching him closely, foreheads slightly creased in consternation.

"What?" he asked, but Ronon merely shook his head and shrugged.

Later that evening after they made camp and started to settle in for the night. John squeezed into the two-man tent he shared off-world with Rodney and was surprised to find Rodney leaning up as if waiting for him, rather than engrossed on his laptop. The single small lamp illuminating the inside of the tent seemed to pick up the blue in Rodney's eyes and intensify it, though John knew better than to mention his more acute night vision.

He settled in, expecting Rodney to simply roll over and go to sleep but instead Rodney carried on watching him intently.

"What?" he grated out finally.

"I wanted to... to thank you. For coming back down for me and..." He waved a hand to indicate all the rest.

John shrugged, expecting that to be an end to the strangeness, but another few minutes passed in unnatural silence, leaving John feeling jittery under the scrutiny of those laser-focused eyes. He huffed out a sigh of annoyance.

"You're welcome," he stated, wondering if Rodney was simply waiting for some acknowledgment.

"You were like Spiderman."

"What?"

"Ronon said you climbed down to me like Spiderman."

"He's been reading too many comics."

"John."

There was no teasing light in Rodney's blue eyes. No crinkle of mirth twitching at the corners of his slanted mouth, and no hands painting abstract images of his words into the air. His name fell from Rodney's lips as a single word but John could read a thousand questions behind it.

"Is it the... bug thing? Are you... Are you turning back-?"

"No. I'm not mutating back into... that."

"Then what is it, John?"

John sighed. "I... I'm fine. Let it go, Rodney."

"No."

John shoved back the edge of his sleeping bag, needing to get out of the suffocating atmosphere inside the tent but Rodney reached out, fingers wrapping around his wrist, holding tight. John knew he could break that hold easily but instead he deflated, lying back down with his other arm thrown over his eyes.

"The retrovirus didn't take me all the way back to human," he whispered, glancing out from beneath his arm to catch Rodney's reaction.

If he expected shock, horror, fear, or disgust then he was pleasantly surprised to find none of those reactions. Instead Rodney nodded simply.

"Huh! Does Carson know?"

"I think so." John thought about it a moment longer, recalling all the tests, some invasive.

"Yeah. He knows."

Rodney gave a noncommittal hum and settled back down on his back.

"Typical really. You get bitten and end up with superpowers." He sighed. "I guess I get to play the genius sidekick. All you need now is a title."

"A title?"

"Bugboy."

"Bugboy," he echoed. "You're not calling me Bugboy."

Rodney rolled back onto his side facing John, grinning inanely like a kid with a new plaything - or a genius scientist with a Eureka moment.

"The Bugmeister!"

John winced, "Isn't that a fishing lure?"

"Huh?" Rodney frowned. "Well, what name would you suggest?"

"John. Just John. John Sheppard."

Rodney stared at him a moment longer before smiling softly, for once not completely oblivious to the undertones. He leaned in and pressed a kiss against John's lips, stunning him because it was totally unexpected.

"What? Why...?"

"I've always wanted to kiss a superhero."

"How about a normal guy?"

Rodney leaned in and kissed him again, lingering until John relaxed into the kiss, one hand reaching up to cup Rodney's cheek gently. He moved into the kiss, closing the distance until they were pressed close, separated only by the thin insulate layer of Rodney's sleeping bag, and then not even that as Rodney unzipped it and drew John fully against him. His blue eyes were blown with arousal when he pulled back slightly.

"You were never normal," he murmured.

And, strangely, that was okay for both of them.

END

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