

From Venice, With Love

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From Venice, With Love

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Summary

Steve and Sam are not together. That didn't mean Steve didn't want it.

(In which Steve's love life becomes a game of telephone, his spy friends' secrecy annoys him, everyone ships Samsteve, even strangers, and in the end he gets the guy.)

Notes

I am not a native Italian speaker, I used google translate so sorry for any mistakes.

Steve and Sam are not together.

Yes, they sometimes went out together on what some would consider dates, but nothing official. Yes, Steve caught himself staring a little too long when Sam wasn't looking. Yes, he thought of what kissing Sam might be like. Yes, they slept in the same bed at times. He had to focus, so nothing embarrassing happened, but no, they were not together.

That didn't mean Steve didn't want it. He wanted Sam, and he wanted him bad. So badly it felt indecent at times, bewildering at others, that he could want someone so much.

He'd experienced it before. He had wanted Peggy something fierce, but with her, he was awestruck by her beauty and the fact that she wanted him too when so few of those double dates Bucky dragged him on worked out in his favor. The infatuation grew into love and then the desire came, searing and red hot. With Sam, he felt the desire first. He saw him a whole week before he approached him and the desire nearly knocked the wind out of him.

He remembered the exact moment he realized he loved him. It happened over time incrementally, in bursts, so he barely noticed until one day as he watched Sam zipping around the kitchen of the penthouse suite Tony forced them to rent, it hit him. Sam was going on about a play his niece and nephew had starred in. He was glowing with pride as he talked, looking back at Steve with sunny smiles every few minutes. It was after the third smile that it hit Steve that he wanted to keep that smile on his face forever, that he wanted to be there with him forever, that he loved Sam.

He didn't say anything about it though. He wasn't sure of Sam's feelings, and he had mentioned an on and off again girlfriend a few times. He didn't want to overstep or make Sam feel uncomfortable, so he ignored it, pushed his feelings down and did his best to focus on the search for Bucky instead. It worked for a little while until a mission with Nick and Natasha ended in Sam being shot and the urge to tell him right then and there almost ripped him in half, but he refrained. Not enough not to be noticed though.

"Enjoying the view?"

Steve turned briefly as Nick walked up beside him.

"It's somethin'," Steve commented. Not as good as watching Sam stand on the balcony with the sun as his backdrop while he took in the city of Munich below them, but still something. Now Sam was lying in bed with a bullet hole in his abdomen because Steve was selfish and despite trying with limited conviction, he couldn't let go of him. The two stood silently for a moment. Steve found the silence more comfortable than he would have months ago. Now, trust and transparency were mostly absolute between them. (Mostly, because Nick would always keep his secrets and there would always be a part of Steve that would remain skeptical of his actions, but he could trust his intentions, so they found their middle ground.)

"You know, your bisexuality might be one of the most ignored and obscure facts about you. I only knew because Coulson liked to tell everyone random Captain America trivia," Nick said after a moment.

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“Wilson. He’s a good man.”

“He is.”

“You love him.”

“I... I do. But Sam is better than me. He deserves better and so how I feel doesn’t really matter if it means Sam’s safe. I think I’ve proven that I only bring danger to his life. He got shot tonight.”

“Then why is he still here?”

“Because he’s pigheaded, that’s why.”

“Perfect match for you then.”

Steve scoffed but didn’t otherwise address his own stubbornness.

“Knowing you, you’ve spent hours going over in your head why your feelings are wrong, but what about his? Given any thought to that?”

“If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were trying to set me up, Nick,” Steve deflected.

“I root for love every now and again, so what?” Nick continued to look expectantly at him, and Steve shrugged.

“I’m not so good at signs, so I don’t know. Even if Sam was throwing them my way, how is it fair—”

“It’s not, never is, but in our line of business, if you don’t throw yourself in now, you may never get the chance to again. Thought you learned that lesson already.”

“Is this you speaking from experience?”

Nick smiled secretively before strolling back inside.

Course he did.

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Steve wasn’t surprised by Nick’s reticence to talk about his personal life with him. He was surprised, however, to learn that the news of his feelings for Sam had reached all the way back to Peggy, though he supposed he shouldn’t have been.

“Who told you,” He asked, sitting next to her bed.

He had decided that they should take a break due to Sam’s injury. He was staying at his friend Leila’s place at her insistence. Steve visited every day, but he decided to take a trip to see Peggy since he was in DC.

“Sharon told me. She knows I don’t pass up good gossip nowadays.”

“Who told Sharon,” He asked with even more confusion.

“Maria.”

Steve was aware that most things Hill knew, Sharon also knew, but it brought up another question.

“Who told Mari— you know what? Never mind. Apparently, my love life has become something worthy of a round of telephone.”

“You would’ve told me anyway. Not that I didn’t already know. Even half lucid I could tell that. Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“Well, you’re a tough act to follow, Peg.”

“You were too, darling. It took me longer than I would’ve liked to realize that I didn’t need someone to follow you or replace you. I just needed to realize I could fall in love again without forgetting you or comparing them to you. It’s my wish you realize a lot sooner, especially since you have someone as wonderful as Sam waiting for you to figure it out.”

“Sam doesn’t know. I haven’t told him.”

“You didn’t tell me, and I knew. Sam is observant, and you’re not exactly a closed book, love. He knows and he’s waiting, just like I was. He knows as well as I do you can be a bit dense and emotionally stunted at times. It’s a good thing you’re easy on the eyes or else he’d be gone by now I fear.”

Steve scoffed and laughed a little at Peggy’s blatant tone and sarcasm.

“In all seriousness my dear, don’t wait too long. He’ll slip right through your fingers. You may find another after him, but you’ll never forget.”

He knew a little of Peggy’s romances over the years, Sharon had thrown some names at him. Daniel Sousa. Angie Martinelli. Gabe Jones. But she never gave him an order or any real details. All he knew was Peggy had been involved with them at one point or other and had loved them all.

“Is this experience talking?” Peggy smiled secretively at him.

“A lady never tells her secrets, Captain.”

“You know, it’s really not so hard for me to believe you trained Nick.”

Peggy smiled a little fuller but didn’t otherwise answer his question.

Of course she didn’t. He was not even surprised.

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After he said his goodbyes to Peggy, he decided to go home and get a shower, maybe catch a nap. When he walked inside, Natasha was there on his couch eating his snacks and watching his television in one of his T-shirts. He wasn't even the least bit surprised to see her there. Her breaking into his apartment was nothing new.

"I think you live in my apartment more than I do."

"It's possible. You're busy chasing after the bane of Bill Murray's existence so I seize the opportunity when I can."

He hung his jacket on the hook and sat down next to her. She shared her Doritos with him. He was able to peacefully enjoy maybe five minutes of Jimmy Fallon's show before she started in on him.

"So Wilson, huh? I see the appeal. That is one fine man."

"Yeah, he is."

Steve blushed a little at the flash of desire just thinking of Sam brought. He did not need to feel that around Natasha. She could sniff out human reactions like a shark.

"So, when are you going to tap that? Because if you don't, I will."

Steve rolled his eyes.

"I don't want to tap that... yet. I want more than that."

The redhead flipped her hair over her shoulder with a slight look of disgust.

"Ugh, all of my friends are settling down. It's getting depressing watching you all throw your lives down the drain."

"Wow," Steve deadpanned at the statement.

"But if you're going to tie cinder blocks to your legs and drown yourself then... at least I understand why you chose Sam to throw yourself over that cliff with."

Steve smiled a little to himself.

"You talk a good game, but I know you're a romantic at heart."

"You think so? Well, since we're in a sharing mood, I should tell you that if you had called dibs first, I definitely wouldn't have kissed Sam on that last mission."

"You did what?!"

"As far as kisses go, it was better than yours and definitely better than Clint. Sharon gives him some competition though. It should be mildly concerning that I've kissed most of my friends and then they end up in relationships. It's like I'm magic or something. I should have Thor knight me."

“Clint’s in a relationship? Know what? Never mind that, you kissed Sam.”

“Well, if it makes you feel better, he pushed me away as soon as we were clear.”

Steve knew his jealousy was ridiculous, but that didn’t stop it from popping up. When he was with Peggy, she had ignored his jealousy most of the time, and if he expressed jealousy to Sam, he’d tease him because most of the time it was over something stupid anyway.

“Don’t worry. Like I told Maria when she got her back up about me kissing Sharon, I liked kissing Schwayze’s understudy better than anyone else anyway.”

“Schwayze’s under— Bucky? You and Bucky? I mean, the file implied but...” Natasha smirked at him lecherously but didn’t tell him anything.

“I always enjoyed Jimmy Fallon. I mean Colbert trumps him any day, but he’s nice, light fun.”

Steve rolled his eyes. His spy friends’ secrecy was starting to annoy him.

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“What’s going on with you,” Sam asked, propped up on the couch with pillows behind him.

Leila’s apartment was small but warm and decorated with vibrant red and orange tones. It smelled of tangerines and marigolds. It reflected her personality nicely. She had gone out to get some groceries, leaving Sam with Steve.

“Hmm?” Steve muttered, looking at Sam.

“You’re really deep in thought over there. Is it about Bucky?”

“No. I’m thinking about you.”

The response slipped out before Steve had a real chance to think about it.

“What about me,” Sam asked with surprise. Steve looked down but ultimately did not voice the emotions that were just on the tip of his tongue.

“This mission, chasing after Bucky, it’s getting too dangerous. You were shot. That’s not okay with me.”

“I’ve been shot before. Is it my favorite thing in the world? Hell no. But this mission is important. Not everyone gets a second chance.”

He knew Sam was referring to Riley and the rest of the EXO-7 pilots as well as some of the veterans Sam had counseled who ultimately succumbed to their demons. Finding Bucky, making sure he got the chance to live a second life, was almost as important to Sam as it was for Steve, though for different reasons. Bucky wasn’t the only thing that was important to him.

“You’re important too. You’re important to me too.”

Sam stared at him silently for a moment before he spoke again.

“It’s my decision. You need someone by your side through this. I don’t mind the globetrotting. It’s nice if you put aside the fact we’re chasing a geriatric assassin.”

“You know I’ll respect your choices, just at least consider slowing down please.”

Sam’s eyes traced his face before a smile slipped onto his lips.

“Well, I guess for you I’ll take it easy. But only until this hole in my stomach heals.”

Steve smiled brightly at Sam, prompting him to chuckle.

“Alright, enough with the light show. As soon as this sucker’s close enough, we’re jumping right back in.”

“You just focus on getting better.”

Sam rolled his eyes but didn’t respond, verbally anyway. Steve felt his heart stutter in his chest as Sam pressed a quick kiss to his cheek and carried on as if nothing happened. Steve couldn’t even respond or say anything about it, because Leila chose that moment to return.

“You two haven’t been fighting crime in my living room, I hope.”

“Not yet. I’ll keep you posted.” Sam quipped.

Steve did his best to shake off his momentary stupor as Leila and Sam bantered with each other. He wasn’t sure what that kiss just meant, it was probably nothing. However, Nick and Peggy’s words came back to him, and he found himself wondering even more if Sam knew about his feelings.

“I’m going to make some chicken alfredo for your dinner, Sammy. I’ll even make soup for you just because you’ve been such a good boy. Between you and me, Cap, Sammy’s a horrible patient and stubborn as a donkey. The only reason he hasn’t been as much of an asshole is that you’re here.”

“Oh please, you haven’t dealt with Steve long enough to know he’s ten times worse,” Sam replied with a snort.

“I’ll believe it when I see it. Rogers, come help me in the kitchen?”

“Yeah.” Steve spared Sam another look, but he had already focused his attention on the television. He decided to just leave it alone and followed Leila to the kitchen.

Steve liked Leila. She was Sam’s friend and clearly loved him. Sam was always happy to see her when they returned to DC and what made Sam happy was more than fine by Steve. Sam talked to her every day, and since he and Sam were usually always together, Steve spoke to Leila too and face-timed with her along with Sam. So he was comfortable moving around the

kitchen with her making enough dinner for the three of them and leftovers despite Steve's ridiculous appetite.

"Sammy's always wanted to go to Italy," Leila said out of nowhere. Steve looked over at her with confusion and curiosity.

"Well, Venice in particular. He's always wanted to taste authentic Italian cuisine, calls it a part of his dream date. Then they'd take a stroll with some gelato before ending the night on a boat ride in the Great Canal where he and his date would share their first kiss. Granted in his fantasies the lucky guy was Denzel Washington, but Captain America's not a horrible trade-off."

Steve looked at her with realization.

"I... I'm sorry, Leila. I know how much you care for Sam and me—"

"Why are you apologizing to me?"

"I... I got Sam shot; I'm leading him on a wild goose chase even though most of me already knows this probably won't end in my favor. I should be trying harder to push him away. Instead, I'm acting selfish and holding onto him when I know he'll just end up hurt."

"Steve... Sammy didn't really get out all that much before you showed up. And when it came to dating? I think in the five years I've known him I've seen him go on five dates. He had this on and off again girlfriend and then there was this guy for a few months, but I've never seen Sam smiling and happy the way he is other than when he's with you. He's a grounded kind of guy, doesn't open up too easily despite appearances. But you? You managed to get under his skin. As for danger, Sam doesn't really do well with people telling him what he's capable of handling, so don't bother. If he says he's in it with you, then he's in it for the long haul. He deserves Venice. I know he'd love it more coming from you." Steve looked back to the soup, trying to stop his whirling mind from going through possibilities and scenarios and maybes and what-could-be.

"Just... treat my Sammy with the respect he deserves. Don't hide your love from him, because he deserves to get every ounce of it," Leila said before patting his shoulder and segued back to the previous conversation she had been conducting with him, something about seasoning, not that Steve could really listen when he was too busy fantasizing about taking Sam on his perfect date. Just the two of them on a boat in Venice. While he was no Denzel Washington, he could try to be smooth. He would lean in just as they made to go under a bridge and kiss Sam softly, savoring the taste of his lips and--

"Steve, if you don't stir the soup, it's going to be chowder instead," Leila reminded him, snapping him out of it. He hoped his ears weren't burning. He was in way too deep.

~*~*~

He rarely was in his kitchen, so he didn't consciously notice the post-it on his fridge for a few hours.

Go for it, punk. It read.

He could tell Bucky's handwriting anywhere.

A few tears might've slipped down his cheek, not that he'd admit it if asked.

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Ultimately, after much ruminating, Steve decided he'd be more pissed at himself if he didn't try than he would be for his selfishness when it came to Sam. He lost his chance with Peggy. In a way, it would be worse to throw this second chance away. Sam had a say in this too. Steve would give him Venice, and if Sam didn't want him, he'd respect that and if he did... well, Steve would have Sam in any way he was willing to give him.

~*~*~

He set the whole thing up with Sharon and Maria's help. Sam would think they were going to Italy to follow up on some rumors of HYDRA presence and Steve would surprise him with the truth once they got there. Peggy had already suggested some places Steve should look into and now he had the whole night planned out perfectly. He waited until Sam was back on his feet before approaching about "the lead". Sam immediately agreed to come and so Steve was off with some sage words of advice from Maria and Sharon.

"Don't fuck it up," Maria said flippantly.

"Honey, stop. He'll do fine," Sharon told her. Before Steve could thank her for the vote of confidence, she continued.

"Just think before you speak, and you'll be fine. Don't overthink though. And whatever the first thing you think of saying is, think long and hard about it, then don't say it."

"It's probably something stupid," Maria concurred.

"Wow, thanks, guys," he said dryly.

Venice was gorgeous. Steve had never been before, but he appreciated the architecture and beauty around him. His hands itched to draw everything he saw, but he had a mission to focus on. He was bound and determined that however this went, this would be an experience Sam treasured forever.

He had told Sam the place they were staking out was a formal dress kind of place, and so he had rented a suit for the occasion. A suit that left Steve breathless and wanting to rip it back off him, but he refrained. Sam rambled on about the "mission" while Steve took them to the restaurant on his motorcycle as there weren't really any cars where they were. Sam always got laser focused on a mission; he barely noticed Steve's lack of response, which was a good thing. He wasn't the best liar in the world. Every time he'd try, he would picture his mother's knowing glare, and it'd fall apart. Finally, Steve pulled up to the restaurant and turned off his motorcycle, chaining it up as Sam stood on the sidewalk looking at the sign outside with confusion.

“Are you sure this is the place? I thought it was a ballroom, not a restaurant,” Sam said, looking up and down the block.

“The thing is, there isn’t a ballroom,” Steve said nervously.

“What do you mean?”

“Leila told me you always wanted to try authentic Italian food and I thought it might be nice if we did it together, tried the food together that is.”

Steve almost face-palmed right then and there.

“What I mean is I wanted to surprise you, and I thought this would be nice.”

“Steve, this is... thank you.”

“I should be the one thanking you. Everything you’ve done for me you didn’t have to. I just wanted you to know how much I... appreciate you.”

Sam stared at him a moment longer before smiling softly.

“I appreciate you too. Come on. If I’m not being shot at tonight, then I’m going to fully enjoy this night.”

They were immediately sat at a table, and Sam was happy to flex his linguistic muscles, having spent a lot of their spare time learning new languages. The waiter complimented Sam on his grasp of the language which left him glowing and recommended some dishes which seemed to satisfy Sam if the almost obscene moans coming from him as he ate was anything to go by.

“That good, huh?” Steve asked with amusement, mostly to hide the effects of those noises on him.

“Like manna from heaven.”

“That’s some high praise.”

In truth, the food was amazing, not that he ever doubted Peggy’s suggestions.

“You know, when I was young, I always fantasized about having this dream date in Italy. It was a recurring fantasy over the years. I know this isn’t a date but thank you again for this, Steve.”

Steve took a deep breath before getting ready to plunge ahead.

“Sam, I actually—”

“Com’è il cibo?” (**How’s the food?**) The waiter asked, cutting Steve off.

“Così buono. Grazie per i suggerimenti.” (**So good. Thank you for the suggestions.**)

“Il piacere è tutto mio. Devo farti un po ‘di dolce? Non che non si guarda abbastanza buono da mangiare.” **(It’s my pleasure. Shall I get you some dessert? Not that you don’t look delicious enough to eat.)** Sam laughed as Steve felt a rush of jealousy.

“Tenere che fino, ho appena potrebbe farvi...” **(Keep that up, I just might let you.)**

“Conto su di esso.” **(I’m counting on it.)**

“Vorremmo in realtà come due gelati per andare e l’assegno, per favore.” **(We’d actually like two gelatos to go and the check, please.)** Steve said a little forcefully, reminding the waiter he was there.

“Certo, signore,” **(Certainly, sir)** he said before scurrying away.

“You alright?” Sam asked once he was gone.

“Fine, I just... if that guy was bothering you—”

“He wasn’t. Getting hit on by hot, foreign guys is good for the ego every now and again. We don’t all have the Captain America physique and fitness going for us.”

“You look just fine the way you are.”

“Well, don’t break out singing Bruno Mars even though I appreciate the sentiment.”

“No really, you do. You look... I think you look... just fine.” Steve looked down, red and flustered.

“Fine’s the best you got?” Sam said in a teasing voice.

“Don’t go fishing for compliments. You’ve got your waiter for that.”

The waiter brought their check and their gelato and slipped Sam his number while he was at it. Steve did his very best not to let Sam see his jealousy. They strolled down the street together eating their gelato in comfortable silence, though Steve felt he might’ve miscalculated because he wasn’t able to hold Sam’s hand this way. That was okay because when they got on the boat, that’s when it would all come to a head.

“You didn’t,” Sam gasped as they came to their boat. It was decorated with lanterns and garlands of flowers.

“I figured I’d give you the full experience.”

“Steven Grant Rogers, you are...” Sam didn’t finish his sentence.

Steve helped him into the boat and graciously greeted the man who would be their navigator. The ride in the Great Canal was gorgeous. Sam lit up taking everything in around them, and even though the bugs annoyed Steve, he enjoyed watching Sam so carefree and happy.

“Steve, no one’s ever done anything like this for me before. I know I keep saying it but thank you so much.”

Sam was sat close to him and now was his chance, there was no one to interrupt him. The calm waters had created a stillness in him that made him feel ready to just tell Sam the full truth.

“Sam, you don’t need to thank me. This is the least I could do to show you how I feel about you. This past year with you has been one of the best years of my life. Getting to know you and going through so much with you, I feel like I’ve known you for years. You’ve done so much for me, you’ve given me so much, and I know I could never really repay you for it and honestly? My heart isn’t really the shiniest gift in the world, but it’s yours to do whatever you want with. Even though that completely terrifies me, it’s yours.”

Steve swallowed hard and watched as Sam stared at him silently for a moment before he blinked, and a smile rose on his face.

“Good, because my heart is yours too.”

Steve smiled back as he felt his heart soaring and his spirits lifting in the freeness of knowing Sam loved him too.

“This is the part where you kiss.”

Steve turned around to look at the man who was rowing their boat. He had forgotten they weren’t alone. The man was smiling kindly and encouragingly at them.

“Right. Yes. Thank you.”

Sam chuckled before pulling Steve to him and pressing their lips together just as their boat went under a tunnel, leaving the space around them lit by nothing except the lanterns and the fireflies around them. Sam’s lips were soft on his, and when he pulled back for a moment, the dark green and orange light created an ethereal glow that only made him more beautiful. Steve shook his head a little at the fact that this was actually happening and he had Sam here, in his arms, kissing him. Sam huffed a breath of laughter before raising his hand to Steve’s cheek gently and kissing him again.

~*~*~

Steve and Sam are together.

They go out together on dates. Steve catches himself staring a little too long when he thinks Sam isn’t looking and when Sam catches him, he throws him looks right back. He found that he could spend hours kissing Sam and not worry about all the other things he was supposed to do. They slept in the same bed at times, and even though he tries to focus, so nothing embarrassing happens, Sam is more than happy when he doesn’t quite grasp control. They hold hands and sit cuddled together on the couch and tell each other they love each other. They are together and Steve couldn’t be happier.

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