Biography

Early Life

Meeting Steve Rogers

"Thank you Buck, but I can get by on my own."

"The thing is, you don't have to. I'm with you to the end of the line, pal."

―Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes after Sarah Rogers' funeral[src]

James Buchanan Barnes was born on March 10, 1917 as the eldest child of four. Barnes grew up to be an overachiever, having been an excellent athlete who also excelled in the classroom.[1] Sometime during his childhood, he met Steve Rogers when bullies were trying to steal his money.[5]. The two became best friends and stuck together for many years.[6]

YoungBucky-Flashback

Barnes attempts to comfort Steve Rogers

In 1936, Steve's mother, Sarah Rogers, died of tuberculosis. After her funeral, Barnes walked Rogers home and offered him his place to stay, but Rogers refused, saying he could get by on his own. Seeing Rogers struggling to find his house keys, Barnes revealed his secret key and told him that he did not have to because he was with him "to the end of the line," something Rogers would keep to heart for a long time.[1]

World War II

Training Rogers

A year later, during an art class, Barnes and Rogers found out that America had joined the Second World War.[7] By this time, Barnes was a three-time YMCA welterweight boxing champion[5]. He then spent two weeks training Rogers at Goldie's Boxing Gym. They visited the US Recruiting and Induction Center in New York City where Rogers was classified as 4F and rejected from service. Barnes was later drafted in the Army.[7]

Sergeant Barnes

Barnes 107th

Barnes tells Rogers he's joining the army

"They'll catch you and worse they'll actually take you."

"Look I know you don't think I can do this..."

"This isn't a back alley, Steve. It's war! Why are you so keen to fight? There are so many important jobs."

―Bucky Barnes to Steve Rogers[src]

Barnes, along with the rest of the 107th Infantry Regiment, was trained during the winter at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. Eventually, Barnes rose to the rank of Sergeant. The day before his shipment out to England, Barnes found Steve Rogers getting beaten up by a bully. He came to the defense of his friend and quickly sent the bully running away with a punch to the jaw and a kick to the behind.

SteveBucky-DarkAlly

Barnes promises to cheer up Steve Rogers

Barnes learned that Rogers had been attempting to enlist in the army again so he could fight in World War II, using false documents to try and get deployed. Barnes informed Rogers that he had received his orders and would be going to war the next morning. At first, Rogers seemed upset, as he was not shipping out to war as well. Barnes remained determined to cheer his friend up and reminded him that he would last be the last eligible bachelor left in New York City.

SteveBucky-StarkExpo

Barnes and Rogers arrive at the Stark Expo

Barnes and Rogers then went to the Stark Expo together, with Barnes determined to enjoy his last day in the city before shipping out. What Barnes did not tell Rogers, however, was that it was in fact a double date with Connie and Bonnie, who were both highly excited to spend the evening with a handsome soldier like Sgt Barnes. When Rogers asked what Barnes had told his own date about him, Barnes simply replied, "only the good stuff" while greeting the girls.

Bucky Steve girls

Barnes watches Howard Stark's presentation

While happily exploring the Expo together, the group of four saw the inventions which Stark Industries was showing off, such as Phineas Horton's Synthetic Man. They later watched as Howard Stark himself demonstrated his prototype flying car, which had greatly impressed Barnes, until it malfunctioned and fell to the ground hard, although Stark was still able to joke that the car was only a prototype. When Barnes turned around to suggest the group go dancing, he saw that Rogers had walked away from the group to try and enlist in the army yet again, despite Barnes' many previous objections.

BuckysGoodbye-StarkExpo

Barnes tries to convince Rogers not to enlist

Barnes soon found Rogers trying to enlist, and first tried to persuade him to rejoin him on the double date. When that did not work, he reminded him that he wasn't going to be fighting in a back alley, but in a war. Despite Barnes' protests, Rogers went through with it, but said a heartfelt goodbye to Barnes before doing so. Rogers told him not to win the war until he got there, and Barnes left with the girls. Barnes and his unit, the 107th shipped out to England the next day.[6]

Prisoner of War

Bucky-Barnes-WWII

Barnes fights the Nazis during WWII

"I thought you were dead."

"I thought you were smaller."

―Captain America and Bucky Barnes[src]

On the frontlines, Barnes and his unit, including Dum Dum Dugan and Gabe Jones, were ambushed by the Nazis at Azzano.[8] Though the battle seemed hopeless as they were strongly outgunned with no reinforcements, the battle turned when another German unit appeared and used an extremely powerful tank to kill the Nazis. The tank then turned to Barnes' unit and they were soon captured by HYDRA. They were sent to work at the HYDRA weapons facility in the Austrian Alps, halfway between Kitzbühel and Klagenfurt.[6]

Brainwash Bucky

Barnes is experimented on by HYDRA

In October 1943, Barnes met other Allied POWs: including Jacques Dernier and James Montgomery Falsworth. During his imprisonment in the facility, he was viciously beaten by Colonel Lohmer. However, other prisoners organized an "accident" which resulted in Lohmer's death.[9] Barnes and his friends worked on parts of the Valkyrie, a giant super bomber. When Barnes became too weak to continue, he was taken to undergo experiments conducted by Arnim Zola.

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Barnes is finally rescued by Steve Rogers

In November 1943, the facility was infiltrated by Steve Rogers, who had undergone an experiment giving him enhanced strength. Rogers made his way through the base and freed the prisoners, including Barnes, having discovered him while chasing down Zola. Seeing his friend and his newly transformed body, Barnes was highly surprised and confused, noting that he remembered Rogers being considerably shorter than he was now while Rogers dragged him out.

Captain America and Bucky

Barnes and Rogers face down Red Skull.

As the freed POW's battled against the HYDRA forces, being led by Dum Dum Dugan, Rogers and Barnes became trapped inside the base as it began to self destruct. During the escape, Barnes and Rogers encountered Johann Schmidt and Arnim Zola, who mocked Rogers' transformation at the hands of Abraham Erskine. After a brief fight, Schmidt and Rogers soon became separated before Schmidt revealed to them his true demonic face, caused by taking an early version of the Super Soldier Serum. Schmidt mocked Rogers' belief that he was still a simple soldier despite being a higher class of humanity before escaping from the base.

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Barnes very carefully makes his own escape

With Schmidt gone, Rogers and Barnes refocused their efforts and began working out an escape route. Rogers suggested that they move up and they decided to use a support beam to move to a safe section of the facility. Due to his poor health, Rogers insisted that Barnes get himself to safety first, however just as he reached the other side, the beam fell apart from under Barnes' feet, trapping Rogers on the other side of the exploding facility.

CATFA-Bucky-NotWithoutYou

Barnes refuses to leave without Steve Rogers

Although Rogers ordered that Barnes escape now before the base exploded and killed them both, Barnes refused, insisting that he would not leave his friend behind; he claimed that they would be able to find another way across. Barnes watched in amazement as Rogers used his strength to bend a steel bar out of his way before launching himself across the gap and rejoining Barnes. They were then able to escape moments before the entire facility was destroyed.

Captain america new high res12

Barnes returns with the other rescued POW's

Barnes and Rogers regrouped with the rest of the escaped POWs and together they walked with the other freed soldiers all the way back to Colonel Chester Phillips' base in Italy, 30 miles out. Once they arrived along with the weapons and vehicles they had stolen from HYDRA, they were greeted warmly by the other soldiers and Phillips chose not to punish Rogers for undertaking the rescue mission against Phillip's strict orders. As the entire unit gathered together, Barnes called for all the soldiers to cheer for their savior Captain America. The POWs were then given medical attention before being given some time away from the battlefield to recover.[6]

Howling Commando

Recruited into the Team

BuckyDrinking-CATFA

Barnes joins the Howling Commandos

"You ready to follow Captain America into the jaws of death?"

"Hell, no. That little guy from Brooklyn who was too dumb to run away from a fight, I'm following him."

―Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes[src]

After their escape from the HYDRA prison, Barnes, Dum Dum Dugan, Jacques Dernier, Gabe Jones, Jim Morita, and James Montgomery Falsworth were given a break from duty. Steve Rogers later joined them in a pub and convinced them to join his crusade against the Nazis and HYDRA, forming a group of fighters known as the Howling Commandos.

Bucky-Barnes-Flirting-WWII

Barnes attempts to flirt with Peggy Carter

Barnes told Rogers that he would not follow Captain America, but he would follow his friend. When Peggy Carter also arrived at the pub to inform Rogers of an upcoming meeting with Chester Phillips and Howard Stark, Barnes had to deal with the realization that Rogers was now the one who gets flirted with, not him. Rogers teased his friend by suggested that she might have a friend before discussing if Rogers would be keeping the uniform of Captain America.

Bucky sniper

Barnes works as a sniper in World War II

Barnes and the newly formed Howling Commandos joined Captain America back onto the battlefield. Over the following months the Commandos progressively destroyed most major HYDRA operations, preventing Johann Schmidt and Arnim Zola any real ability to work on their scientific projects and plans, all while destroying HYDRA's army units, tanks and other facilities. Barnes would often work as the sniper of the group, protecting his team of the Commandos.[6]

Final Mission

Bucky - Cap

Barnes and Rogers prepare for a mission

"I had him on the ropes."

"I know you did."

―Bucky Barnes and Steve Rogers[src]

At the beginning of 1945, Barnes, Captain America and the rest of the Howling Commandos prepared for a mission to board a HYDRA train carrying Arnim Zola, with the aim of capturing the HYDRA scientist to learn about the plans of the Red Skull. While they looked over the side of the snowy mountain they would have to manurer around, Barnes joked that this mission was Rogers' way of getting payback for the time Barnes made Rogers ride a roller coaster that made him throw up, which Rogers neither confirmed nor denied.

Howling Commandos Hijack the EB912

Barnes and Rogers hunt down Arnim Zola

When Jim Morita intercepted a radio signal from HYDRA confirming that Zola was on the train, Barnes, Rogers and Gabe Jones used a zip wire to board the train as it traveled through the mountains. While Jones stayed on top of the roof of the train, Barnes and Steve Rogers entered and began exploring the various carriages. Moments after their arrival however, they were suddenly split up and ambushed by a team of armored HYDRA soldiers sent to kill them by Zola.

BuckyBarnes-TrainShootOut

Barnes fighting onboard the HYDRA train

While Rogers was forced to fight a heavily armed HYDRA guard, Barnes became pinned down by three soldiers. Although he was able to kill two, he quickly ran out of ammunition and feared he would soon be killed. Rogers, however, was able to open the door and throw him a new gun which he used to kill the last remaining soldier when Rogers distracted him. Barnes claimed that he had him on the ropes and Rogers assured him that he believed him.

Bucky Shield

Barnes picks up Captain America's Shield

However just as the pair began to relax, another HYDRA soldier then appeared behind them and fired at them with a HYDRA Assault Rifle, blowing a hole through the side of the train and knocking Rogers off his feet. Barnes picked up Captain America's Shield and fired at the soldier, but he was shot again, the power of the blast throwing him off the train and leaving him hanging on to a damaged rail for dear life as the train continued to speed through the mountains.

Bucky-Barnes-Death-Fall

Barnes seemingly falls towards his death

Rogers dispatched the soldier by launching his shield at him and turned his attention to desperately trying to rescue Barnes as he hung off a rail on the side of the train. Rogers begged Barnes to hold on as he inched closer to him and tried to grab his hand, but before they could reach each other the rail snapped, which resulted in Barnes falling into the icy Danube River below while Rogers could only look on in horror as his closest friend seemingly disappeared forever.[6]