

Chapter 12

Someone keeps shouting my name. The sound is muffled, but it still cuts through me clear as day. My surroundings aren't clear -it's dark, but I'm not paying attention to anything around me. All I exist in is the voice screaming for me. I know I need to get to them, and help them. I'm never scared, but I am now. My body isn't in any pain anymore as I fumble my way forward in the dark. I can't even tell from which direction the voice is coming from. All of a sudden, I'm walking through an apartment building hallway. The light overhead is harsh, and I feel it burn into my eyes as I continue walking hurriedly, passing dingy doors on either side of me. My feet barely make a sound against the old, green carpet marred with questionable stains.

"Hey, hey..." I hear faintly someone speak.

My skin feels burning hot in the light from the lamps I pass under, and yet I feel icy, my fingers numb. This all feels so familiar to me; like I've walked down this very hallway a million times. I finally find the door I have been looking for. I fumble for a gun, but with mounting panic, I come up empty-handed. I have to go in. I throw myself against the door and it flies open with a loud crack! And I stumble into the apartment.

It is old and dirty. I've been here before too. I panic and start crying, unable to stop the scene from playing out for me. I try to resist, but my feet bring me further into the apartment.

"No, no." I mumble, tears blurring my vision as I walk into the room.

"You're alright." A faint voice speaks.

As I already knew, I find her in the middle of the dark, sulky room, lying on her side, back toward me. I'm by her side, sobbing. She's totally naked, rolled up in a ball. I place a shaking hand on her cold arm, my tears making the bruises on her pale flesh dance and contort like watercolor on a canvas. Shaking, I weakly curl up over her. Sobs shake my entire frame as I brush her dark hair out of her face.

"Please, please." I sob, my tears falling down on her, but I can't stop what has already happened.

In the blink of an eye, my whole body goes completely limp. I feel warm. Relaxed. I breathe in deeply, and out. In. And out. I feel like I've just finished a hard workout, my body is completely spent and content.

"You're alright." The bodyless voice tells me again. "Come back to me."

I sigh, not wanting to leave the feeling of warmth and safety, but feel it pull away from me and I instinctively follow it, like a sunflower turning to catch the rays of life the sun provides. My eyes flutter open and the momentary feeling of bliss escapes me as I feel my physical body again. I'm cold.

"Hey." That voice speaks and I turn my head to the right, now being able to pinpoint where it is originating from.

Maximo is hovering right there, her brows slightly furrowed, eyes searching mine, concerned. I feel so tired. I try sitting up, but Maximo places a warm hand on my cold, clammy shoulder, pushing me so I'm back into the pillows. I'm back on the old couch in the dark cabin in the lonely valley under the gargantuan mountain. I shiver.

"You're safe." Maximo says, still looking slightly frightened. It is not something I've seen on her before; fear. I look away, suddenly feeling horribly ashamed and naked.

"Who was that?" Maximo asks so I'm afraid that if she spoke at a normal volume I would fall apart.

"No one." I lie, slightly moving my shoulder away from her hand, which she removes. "It was just a dream."

I know by the small silence that follows that my lie has not been bought. I wish myself anywhere but lying on the couch like this under Maximo's gaze. Even Hayward's company would be preferable right now. I stare blankly at the wall furthest away from Maximo and she lets out a small exhale.

"Someone told me once that talking about things helps." I can't believe she's throwing my words back at me.

I turn my head and shoot her what I hope to be a look that settles the discussion. Apparently, it does not, as Maximo only tilts her head slightly, narrowing her eyes.

"I don't want to talk about it." I tell her, my voice slightly breaking, making my eyes well up.

Embarrassed, I try to blink the tears away. Maximo doesn't say anything, she just sits there. I feel a pit of anger, or annoyance well up in me. Why is she being so bloody righteous, sitting there like that with that empathic look on her stupid face? Just in case she is listening in on my thoughts, I think of an especially rude string of curse words, but Maximo doesn't do anything to indicate she heard me.

In the middle of my middle school angst self-pity party, I'm hit by a wave of cold, and I shiver again, feeling weak and fuzzy. My eyes seem like never-ending pools of tears that keep constantly nearly brimming over the edge. Maximo places the back of her hand on my forehead without speaking. Her hand feels cool and lovely against my forehead that feels like it is being on fire, and I close my eyes at the sensation. Maximo mutters something to herself which I can't hear nor understand at the moment and she removes her hand to my disappointment.

"I'm not..." I begin, barely enunciating. "...feeling great."

"I can tell." Maximo mutters and goes to touch my bad arm, which sends a cold shiver through me.

"Don't..." I slur, shoving my body away from her, just wanting to be left in peace.

"I'm sorry, I have to check." She says, gently lifting my arm up ever so slightly towards her, setting it down tenderly to rest on my stomach.

I'm too tired to argue with her as she starts undoing my sling and makeshift bandage although a bolt of pain occasionally shoots through me. I've nearly dozed off when I hear Maximo inhale sharply and curse to herself in what I can definitely pinpoint as Sokovian.

"Hmm." I hum, my eyes shut, almost asleep.

"It's infected." She says, her accent flattening the sound of the words.

"Oh oh."

"Oh oh." She repeats. "I don't know..." She talks to herself and I zone out, finding comfort in the lulling wave of sleep that keeps washing up on me.

"Hey, hey, come back to me." Maximo lightly shakes my shoulder, and I open my sensitive eyes which definitely do not like the light right now. "Hey, there you are."

I turn my head and look at Maximo, who smiles so I'm clumsily lift my good arm and grab a thick strand of her red hair in my hand. I chuckle and pull down on it slightly.

"Hmm." I say, smiling, finding her hair amusing for some reason.

"Alright." She says, prying my fingers open and I let go. She keeps hold of my hand and squeezes it so I'm getting me to focus my gaze from her hair to her face again. She seems to slightly float left to right in front of my eyes.

"I never even asked for your name." Maximo says. "Can you tell me your name?"

"Hm-hmm." I say, smiling slightly. "Olivia."

"Olivia." She repeats. "Good. Olivia I need you to tell me what to do."

"I want to sleep. Sllleeeeeeep." I whine and Maximo puts a hand on my cheek and I go still, the feeling of cold against hot so soothing.

"God you're of no help." She sighs and lets go of me and I vaguely see her walk off and I let my heavy eyelids drop, finally encasing me in darkness.

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