The Ra is suddenly surprisingly empty, and I don't encounter too many di iculties as the guard walks me down long and complicated passageways, using his ID to open doors for us. I keep very close, holding the guard's gun in my right hand, pointing it at him from under my le arm in its sling.

a

I know I made the right call to have this specific guard lead me along, as he instantly struck me as rather young and submissive. He doesn't once try to raise the alarm. The people this kind of place employs constantly surprise me with their ineptitude. Surely he should be able to disarm me or at the very least raise some suspicion amongst his coworkers, but he does neither, placidly leading me towards our destination.

We finally come to a halt in front of a steel door, guarded by two guards. I silently curse at my arm being in a sling; I'm not sure I can physically overpower three armored men. That leaves me with just one tactic.

"Yes?" The heavier of the two guards looks at my guard as we approach. The guard falters, but I speak up before he has the chance or time to say anything incriminating.

"I need to speak to Maximo again." I try to appear as convincing as possible.

"But she's-"

"I don't care, this is urgent. You can go ask Agent Smith if you want to, but he is not in a good mood, so be it at your own risk." I sigh, feigning boredom.

The guards look from one another, uncertainly. I sigh loudly once again, attracting their attention.

"I am seriously wanting to get this over with and that witch put behind bars for good. I think you'll agree with me. So, feel free to check with Agent Smith but at least let me in in the meantime. You can see he sent one of yous with me to alleviate you from your posts."

I inch towards the silent guard next to me and poke him with the gun, just to remind him, as the two in front of Maximo 's door contemplate my last statement.

"Right. Well, I guess we'll let you in." One of them finally says and I roll my eyes.

"Finally. Gees."

"Right, you'll stand guard while we go check, copy?" They look at the guard next to me.

"I.. eh." He falters.

"Yes, yes, he will. Now come on, I'd like to leave this wretched place sometime." I impatiently look at the guards and they begin to open the doors to Wanda.

As they open, I advance, still keeping the gun next to the guard and we walk into the grey steel box. I see Wanda sitting in a corner, but I don't pay her any attention and instead turn around to face the guards.

"He can open the door from the inside, correct?" I ask them.

"Yes, his ID. Will unlock the doors." The guard replies.

"Merry Christmas." I force a smile as the doors begin closing.

As soon as I hear them slam shut, I quickly remove the gun from under my arm and hop towards the guard, who is taken completely aback. I smash him in the side of his head with the hilt of the gun and he folds like paper, coming to lie in a heap on the floor, not moving.

I spin around and hurry towards the small figure huddled in the corner. She's leaning against the wall, arms locked across her chest by thick black straps, and the black collar is still around her neck, beeping peacefully.

"Wanda." I nudge her gently and her head rolls down before she li s it back up and looks at me, dazed. "Hey, you ok?"

She blinks a couple of times, eyes completely unfocused and I suspect they've given her a nice healthy dose of tranquilizer. I look her over, trying to decide what to do next. I did not have time to think this far along.

Improvising, I leave Wanda and return my attention to the guard, still lying still on the floor. I pat him over, locating anything that could be of use to me. I find a pair of cu s, and remove them and place them on him, just in case. Then, I get his ID and a keychain I find in his right pocket. Pleased, I shu le back towards Wanda, who has closed her eyes again.

I leave her be and begin the surprisingly long and tedious process of getting the straightjacket o her.

"Fucking piece of shit." I mutter under my breath as I struggle, aware of the very limited window I have to get Wanda free.

"Language." Comes a small sigh from Wanda, but I don't have time to react, being completely focused on the straps, cursing at my broken arm, wishing Wanda could have broken some other, less useful body part.

Finally, her arms are free. I swi ly move to the cus around her wrists. When I plopped them on her what feels like eons ago back in the cabin, I didn't have any chance to actually look them over and figure out how they actually work.

I try holding the guard's ID near them to see if it would unlock them, but nothing happens. I turn Wanda's wrists, frantically looking for anything that could indicate how they would unlock. There are two small holes in them that I missed previously, so I begin trying out all of the keys dangling from the chain.

"Oh for crying out loud." I say, exasperated. None seem to work.

"Collar. Please." Wanda whispers, eyes still closed.

"Yes, yes." I begin fumbling with it instead, my stomach turning uncomfortably when I see how tight it actually sits around her neck.

I find a keyhole rather quickly and find the right key. Just as I push the key in, I'm yanked backward by cold steel around my neck. I gasp, surprised, my ribs yelling out in protest as the guard drags me away from Wanda, using the chain linking the cu s on his wrists to choke me. My right hand claws at his hands, but he yanks tighter, and I can't breathe.

"Fucking bitch." The guard splutters behind me as I begin to see stars.

I bring my arm down and elbow him, hoping to elbow one specific body part, but all I come into contact with is his thigh.

"No, you don't!" He yells and yanks back harder.

I desperately fumble with the chain, but I've got no hope without using both of my hands, and even then... I begin to feel fuzziness take over and I know I'm seconds from passing out. I'm almost gone as I hear a loud bangecho round the walls of the cell. The pressure around my neck pulls me down into a lying position.

Cold fingers claw around my neck, and then the pressure is gone and I turn to the side, violently coughing as my lungs burn.

"Are you ok?" Wanda asks me, rubbing my back as if that is going to help me breathe, but I appreciate the gesture.

"I'm splendid." I hoarsely say between fits of coughing.

"What on earth were you thinking?" Wanda asks me, brows furrowed, eyes still glazed over, but looking like she's more present than before.

"Thank you is a start." I mutter and sit up, rubbing my throat.

"Seems like you should be the one to thank me." Wanda smiles a loopy smile and nods towards the guard lying behind me.

I turn around and see him lying on the ground, hands covering his thigh from which blood slowly pools on the ground around him. He's pale and looks scared to death, but I can instantly tell he's going to live, and not try any other heroics anytime soon.

Suddenly, a red light comes on and an alarm starts blaring loudly. Time's up. I look back to Wanda, seeing that she's managed to get the collar o her neck, but the cu s are still there. Deciding it's as good as we're likely to get, I push myself up to standing, ignoring my ribs and my still burning lungs. I pull Wanda up to standing as well before I go to pick up the fallen keys and ID.

"What are we-" Wanda begins, but I shake my head, pushing past her.

I use the ID to open the doors, to my relief seeing that the hallway outside is still empty. I look back at Wanda and point towards the floor.

"Get the gun. I'd ask you if you know how to use it, but seems like you do." I laugh as she turns around and goes to pick it up.

I unholster my own gun and we begin to make our way through the building, and I am trying to remember what way I came from, but with all the adrenaline coursing through me, I'm finding it unbelievably di icult to recall. Wanda is slowing me down considerately, and I decide to grab her hand to physically move her along quicker as the tranquilizer works against us. I peer around every corner, occasionally having to hide inside a room or behind a structure as a group runs past us, but so far I've managed to avoid confrontation, which is sure to bring every guard and agent in the facility bearing down on us.

"I can't-" Wanda pants behind me but I ignore her, tugging her forwards.

"Come on." I mutter, my brain working overtime on a solution. I begin to question how insanely stupid I was for believing I could get Wanda out of the bloody Ra . She might have escaped before, but I am sadly not insanely rich nor do I own any powers or technology which would get me out of this. The glock in my hand looks pathetic.

"Olivia, please." Wanda pleads and I finally stop and turn around to look at her.

Wanda's face is ashen, and a fine layer of sweat covers her brow. She doesn't look like she'll make it much further. And I certainly won't be able to carry her, even though I suspect she's even lighter than last time I had to move her.

"Alright, alright." I frantically mutter, seeing a flight of stairs that lead down. "Ok, this way, just a bit further!"

I pull Wanda along and she gets moving again, her breaths fast behind me. I know we should definitely not be going down, but perhaps getting o this floor will give us slightly longer for Wanda to catch her breath. I suddenly hear footsteps in front of us, and before I have time to push Wanda back up the stairs three guards appear below us.

Their reflexes are nothing compared to mine, and I manage to shoot two of them before the third even gets his gun out. He points it at me and I fire. He drops along with the other two. I carefully guide Wanda around them and we make it down two floors.

By now, I am completely lost. All I know now is I need to find a room in which to hide for a while. I let go of Wanda's hand and begin to agitatedly open random doors, finally finding one that will do.

"Come on Wanda." I gently get Wanda's attention.

She is leaning against a wall by the staircase, eyes closed, but when she hears my voice she opens them and begins to wobble towards me. She trips right next to me and I catch her weight, again having to ignore the pain in my ribs and now also my le arm which she has awkwardly trapped under her weight.

"Sorry." She mumbles.

"It's ok, it's ok, just get in the room." I whisper as I hear more voices shout indistinctly over the still blaring alarms.

Wanda moves inwards and I manage to shut the door behind us, plunging us in almost complete darkness.

"Where are we?" I hear Wanda's voice to my le.

I try to make sense of my bearings just as the lights flicker on. We're in something that to me most closely resembles a lab. I hear footsteps run past the door and hold my breath, but they don't check the room.

I move past Wanda towards the center of the room, curiously eyeing the machines around me. I have no idea what they're used for, nothing looks familiar -but then again the furthest I went in chemistry was 12th grade in high school.

"You ok, Wanda?" I ask her over my shoulder.

"Mmh hmm." Comes the reply.

"Maybe there's something here that would unlock those cus of yours. What I wouldn't give to see some of your red wiggly woos right now." I muse, walking further in.

I pass di erent weird-looking machinery, curiously trying to find anything that could possibly work on Wanda's cu s. A shimmer catches my eyes, and I turn towards a glass box with something that I would describe as a silver mist floating around.

I walk up towards it and place a hand on the cool glass. The mist inside swirls rapidly, pushing against the glass towards my palm. A voice inside me is cautioning me, telling me I should get back to looking for solutions to my very real, current predicament, but I can't take my eyes o the mist.

"Olivia?" I hear Wanda ask, but I'm too caught up in the light nuances of the mist.

I've never seen anything behave like this. It's not a complete gas, but it's not a liquid either, instead living somewhere between the two states of matter. I pick up the small box and bring it closer to my face, the contents angrily swirling around.

"Olivia!?" I hear Wanda again, her voice shrill.

"Hey, come look at what I found!" I whisper-shout, still not looking away from the mist.

"Olivia?" I hear Wanda's voice much closer now. "What's that?"

"I don't know. It was just sitting here." I say, and finally look up at Wanda, who has emerged to stand just a few meters away.

Her eyes fall from mine to the box in my hand. I can see curiosity bloom in them as she tilts her head and walks closer. The mist swirls furiously against its small little prison. I li the box up to eye level for Wanda to inspect it closer.

"It's beautiful." She whispers, so ly tracing a finger against the glass.

"I've never seen anything like it." I say, looking back at the contents of the box. "It seems to have a mind of its own."

"I'm not so sure we should touch it." Wanda's voice has changed,

going from amazed to guarded. "Put it back."

"What? Why?" "I don't like it." "Wanda, you didn't like me when we met, and look what happens

when you give something a chance!" I grin up at her, but she doesn't look amused. "What? I'm saving you!"

"Yes, let's get back to that." She tells me, eyes locked on the box in my hand. "Put it away."

"Wanda-"

"Olivia, I'm not joking. Put. It. Away."

a

đ

a

"Sheesh, calm down." I sigh. "I was just-"

I'm cut short by a loud crash by the door. Wanda turns around, her hair billowing around her. I hear footsteps and voices. We're about to be found. Wanda turns back towards me, eyes wide in fear.

I nod encouragingly, and gesture to her to follow me as I slowly back away from the door. She nods back, her eyes flickering towards the box still in my hand.

We're too slow.

"There!" A voice shouts and I know we've been seen.

I spin around on my heels, facing Wanda who's behind me, and seeing a group of ten or fi een guards behind her.

"Shit, Wanda watch o-" I begin, dropping the glass box to grab my gun from its holster.

"Olivia don't!" Wanda shrieks, but it's too late.

The glass box shatters by my feet. I look down in time to see the swirling contents of the box shoot up from the ground. The mist hovers for what feels like an eternity in front of my face, Wanda is frozen in the background, before the entire room explodes in such a bright light I have to cover my eyes and stumble backward, trying to get away.

The last thing I hear is Wanda yelling my name and I feel an intense burn all over my body. It's on my skin, and inside of me, filling up every atom that makes up what I am. I think I must be yelling; the pain is unbelievable, but I don't know anything for sure anymore, not even my own name.

As soon as it began, it stops.

I'm surrounded by darkness.

I hear a faint knocking

I realize the darkness comes from my eyes being closed, so I open them.

My surroundings are blurry.

The knocking becomes louder.

I finally make sense of where I am, but I can't believe what I see.

"Olivia, come on!" Someone yells. "I can't believe you, I am notyour alarm! Get up! You're going to miss Mr. Lauder's lecture again!"

I stare at the door of my college dorm room in utter shock.

A/N: And I whaaaaaaaaa???

Continue reading next part 🗆