



Chapter 3

"Our primary target is Wanda Maximoff." Hayward continues, speaking curtly. "She is wanted by both S.W.O.R.D. and the FBI, thus your involvement."

He nods at us in a way that makes me certain he would give almost anything not to have us here. I haven't had anything to do with enhanced individuals before; the closest thing I've dealt with would be the woman I arrested in New York a few weeks ago who was setting things on fire by holding gasoline in her mouth and then spitting it out on various things, and setting them on fire. Her goal had been to travel all fifty states and set stuff on fire in every single state. I chuckle slightly at the absurdity of all of that. Hayward catches my eyes and his lips tighten to form a straight, thin line.

"Anything funny, agent?" He asks in a slightly shaking voice.

"Nope, nothing. Dead serious." I smile politely, putting my hands in my pockets. I catch Agent Woo smiling at me, but when he notices me noticing him, he promptly puts on his serious face again.

"I hope I can count on your professionalism, agent." Hayward addresses me again, and it seriously takes a lot for me not to retort back. "We have located Miss Maximoff a few kilometres from here and—"

"I'm sorry, how have you located her? I would assume anyone who travels here would not want to be found." I speak up.

"We've traced a significant energy source here, and have confirmed her identity via satellite." Hayward begins.

"So why don't you just knock on her door and politely tell her S.W.O.R.D. wants a word? I'm sure she'll happily comply." I shrug and smile at the redness creeping up Hayward's face. I don't know why I sometimes just can't help but antagonise people I probably should not antagonise. More often than not, all I manage with it is to put myself in worse and worse situations. But there's just something about the man standing in front of me I can't place a finger on.

"I appreciate your humour, agent." Hayward says, clearly meaning the opposite. "Miss Maximoff and S.W.O.R.D. have a... complicated history."

"By complicated, he means her being imprisoned on the Ra for a lovely while and him dissecting her boyfriend and then him shooting at her children." A new voice pipes up.

I turn around to see a woman with long dark hair, glasses, and a beanie walk up. "Sorry, couldn't resist."

She smiles at me and nods familiarly at Agent Woo before facing Hayward. "Am I forgetting anything? Oh, right, you trying to murder her in Westview. Surely that's all?"

I can't help my eyebrows shooting up. For once, I don't know what to say. A sentiment clearly shared with Hayward as his mouth opens and closes a few times without a sound escaping him.

"Dr. Darcy Lewis." The woman introduces herself. "Don't forget the Dr. part."

"That is certainly one way of retelling the events, but that is not quite the whole truth." Hayward finally regains his voice again. "Miss Maximoff tried to steal S.W.O.R.D. property worth billions, then took thousands of Americans hostage and tortured them. That is not something that can be overlooked, no matter who you've fought or saved before. As I assume most of you are aware, Miss Maximoff has pulled stunts like this before, we were hugely lucky she did not repeat her actions in Lagos, for example."

Hayward is back on a roll, having regained authority as he speaks. Dr. Lewis makes an exaggerated roll of her eyes and Agent Woo shifts uncomfortably.

"Now Miss Maximoff has fled the United States where she is to be prosecuted. Her not having a visa and simply being allowed on U.S. soil on the government's goodwill only complicates matters for her. Our objective here is to return Miss Maximoff to the U.S. to answer for her crimes in accordance with the law—"

"Something you got out of." Dr. Lewis mutters, but Hayward chooses to ignore her and carries on.

"—and with as few casualties as possible. Now the full extent of Miss Maximoff's powers are still unknown to the government, and she is classified as highly dangerous."

"Maybe we should just let her hang out here, then, if she's so dangerous." An agent to my left speaks up nervously.

"Under no circumstances can we allow Miss Maximoff to escape."

"Again." Dr. Lewis adds on and Agent Woo seems to have to stifle a chuckle.

"Agent Woo will be your team leader, and he will debrief you as he sees fit, but I want to remind everyone here that S.W.O.R.D. retains jurisdiction over this case, so I am the one in charge, and I will deal with this situation as I see fit."

"In accordance to the law, of course." Agent Woo reminds Hayward, which earns him a sickly sweet smile.

"Of course." Hayward straightens up and looks around. "I will expect a debrief from you Agent Woo at eleven hundred hours, prompt. Dismissed."

And with that, he turns on his heels and walks directly out of the tent, two heavily armoured men following him out.

"What a lovely man." I say to break the ice, which earns a few chuckles from the agents all around me.

"So, you have heard the position Hayward and S.W.O.R.D. are taking." Agent Woo walks up in front of us. "The FBI's official position is the same."

"And what is your position?" I ask, sensing there is more to it than Agent Woo or Hayward has led on.

"Dr. Lewis and I worked the Westview Anomaly case together." Agent Woo says, nodding at Dr. Lewis who is now leaning against a desk, looking oddly out of place.

"It was a real hoot." Dr. Lewis pipes in. "Wanda was kind enough to make me an escape artist. Haven't been able to let that dream go ever since." She says, looking like she's dreaming about something hugely pleasant and amusing.

"Right." Agent Woo says, looking back from Dr. Lewis at the agents in front of him. "Now both I and Dr. Lewis are of the personal belief that Wanda was not fully aware of what she was doing in Westview and that she tried her best to rectify the situation once she became aware."

"I'm sorry, I'm confused." An agent speaks up. "She held people hostage without knowing she held people hostage?"

"Well, yes." Agent Woo says slightly uncomfortably.

"Haven't you ever done that?" Dr. Lewis asks the agent.

"I have prepared folders for you all about the case, I want you to read up and come and get me once you're up to speed and we'll formulate a game plan? Alright?" Agent Woo turns around and picks up a folder from his bag and starts handing them over to us one at a time. "Now I want to reiterate that while S.W.O.R.D. has jurisdiction, the FBI is here to oversee the legality of their actions. We do not want a repeat of Westview, but our ultimate objective remains the same: to return Wanda to the U.S. with as few casualties as possible."

"Why would there be casualties?" I ask. "As far as I'm aware, she's part of the Avengers, isn't she? Aren't they the good guys?"

"Read up on the case, and you'll see she won't probably share our ideas of returning her to be prosecuted." Agent Woo says, thus dismissing us.

I pick up my go-bag and walk over to a corner of the tent where the other agents are making themselves comfortable. I plop down on a chair, dropping my bag and opening up the folder. From inside the folder, a woman about my age is looking back at me through tired eyes. I recognise her as Wanda Maximoff instantly.

"Gee, can you guys believe it?" One of the agents whispers. "All this shit for this bitch? We better be fucking careful, I've heard she's like seriously lost the plot, this one has."

I tune them out and look back at the picture of Wanda. I don't have any especially positive feelings towards her or any of the Avengers, to us they mostly mean costly reparations and lots and lots of paperwork, but somehow the woman staring back at me doesn't strike me as this evil super lord everyone is making her out to be. She just seems tired.

[Continue reading next part](#)