

Chapter 39

My mood has drastically shifted since the almost dreamlike happiness I was floating around in earlier this morning. Like dreams though, I should have known something would eventually come along and put a stop to my joy. I've not really moved from the couch, having only gotten up to find myself a book to read to distract my wandering thoughts, which seem bent on wandering past the closed door of the bedroom to circle around Wanda, who I know is sulking in bed.

Aer having tried to explain to her how bad of an idea it would be to try to meddle with the past, Wanda's mood also drastically plummeted from the high she was on earlier. And Wanda seems already to be prone to quite severe mood swings, so whatever mood she's currently in is not one I am too thrilled about. She tried to argue with me, but as I clearly was not swayed by her arguments, she resorted to hugging about the cabin for a while. She would stomp around, exhaling loudly and just being loud in general in an attempt to either annoy me or for me to feel pity for her and relent. I swear she also let her eyes literally flash red once or twice. When I didn't budge though, she decided slamming the door shut and barricading herself in her room would be the mature thing to do.

And so, here I am, on the couch, alone, trying to read some old dusty book in Romanian, being the mature one but not really feeling all that great about it. I've been staring at the same paragraph for too long, and it's not because my Romanian is dustier than the book in my hands. I wish I could just go back in time a few hours to when I was making pancakes with Wanda, my only care in the world being keeping my blush away from her attentive eyes.

You can turn back time, idiot.

Oh, right, that is also one of Wanda's methods in warfare; occasionally adding her commentary to my speeding thoughts. It's annoying as hell, but at least it's better than silence, and I know she's just skimming over the most prominent, or loud, as she would call them, of my thoughts and not looking deeper. Even when we're mad at each other, she's never done that, and I know this won't be when she starts. So far, I've refrained from answering back, fearing my answer would not be one to placate her at all, but rather the opposite. Now though, a er nearly four hours of her incessant bad mood and my growing temper as well (which this stupid book is not doing anything to help, by the way), I feel like poking the bear just a little bit, if only to get her to actually interact with me a little more.

Our first fight, how sweett think loudly, and Wanda cannot help herself but answer, just like I knew she would.

First?

Her voice is laced with irritability and I can very easily picture her expression. Well, she's not wrong. I guess this is the first fight we've had wherein one of us hasn't been shot or had their bones broken.

Yet.

Even when she's pissed o , her thoughts in my head bring with them that warm feeling so similar to sinking into a warm bath a er a long day, so I don't mind her snarky comments at all. My reaction is not the reaction she's a er, I know, but I'll take any interaction I can get with her. She actually lets me hear her hu , and then she's silent, and I return to staring at the stupid book.

With a sigh, I close the book which sends some dust flying up in the air. I was on page thirty-two, and I've been on page thirty-two for the past hour or so, and yet I could not recount what I've read so far even if it was to save my own life. What I could recount instead are the countless different scenarios I've gone through in which I take Wanda back to the past. Most of them end in disaster, and I'm not keen at all to see any of them become reality.

I place the book down on the ground next to the couch and sit up, rubbing my face in my hands. The thing that is weighing on me so heavily is not only all the different ways I could fuck up both the past and the present and potentially cause an extinction-level catastrophe, but mostly the image of Wanda's face in front of me, her eyes shining with unshed tears and heartbreaking hope as she tried to convince me. I know now why she came back here; what she was doing with that woman on the mountain. She has always only been trying to see her family again.

And that's the thing with grief, no matter where you go or how far away you move in time, it just follows you, and you never know when you'll turn a corner and come face to face with that grief again. It sneaks up on you, and when it's upon you it's just as debilitating as the first time you met. And Wanda, she's had to meet grief too many times to be able to separate herself from it. She's learned to live in some sort of symbiosis with it. Sometimes she's Wanda, sometimes she's her grief, but mostly she's a gray twilight made up of both, with no discernible shapes or shadows to distinguish herself anymore. And it's exhausting to keep looking.

And that's the reason I cannot shake the feeling of guilt from my shoulders. I am the thing standing between her and her possibly shedding some of that grief and allowing maybe even just some ray of light in. I know I am, and she knows it very well too, and it's eating me up inside and I don't know what to do.

"But you can. So why won't you?"

Those words she spoke to me are the words that keep repeating in my head no matter how I try to intellectualize the situation. I can. I can help her. Why won't I? She said it too; I could prevent anything bad from ever happening to my family. What kind of a person am I if I don't at least try to protect and to save them?

And this has been the way my day has been spent. On the couch, feeling like the worst human on earth for keeping Wanda away from her family, and from failing my own family once and now not even trying to rectify my mistake. But I'm so scared. What if we do go back and we fail? What if we go back and we succeed, and I lose Wanda, because now she'll have the people she loves around her, and she won't need me?

"Shit." I sigh and get o the couch, resorting to pacing around the small living room.

The cabin is so constricting, like a straight jacket, and I just need to move and to breathe, and some space between me and Wanda and my stupid, confusing feelings about the whole situation, and about her.

I grab a sweater Wanda has discarded on her side of the couch and then I head out, not bothering to tell Wanda I'm going. She'll feel it anyway, no need for words. I'm only going for a while, and anyway, she's the one who's clearly not wanting to see me right now, so she'll be happy with some space too, I assume.

I lose myself in my thoughts once again as my body automatically falls into a brisk jog as I step o the porch and onto the grass. My body comes alive with relief at being allowed to move without any pain once again. Were I back at home in New York, I might've made my way to my usual bar to help quiet the thoughts that way, but sadly here I fall back on the next best thing; figuratively and literally running away from my problems.

I let my feet decide the way as I again mull over the realization that I actually went back in time twice already and nothing seemed to have changed. If one decides to go back in time, doesn't that mean that one has always made that decision and so one cannot change the present as the present has already been changed?

Fuck, I really should have taken some more philosophy classes or something in college. Who knew time conundrums would be something I would have to worry about. I miss having to only worry about where my gasoline-drinking madwoman would strike next. I also keep thinking back on my time in New York with the Avengers. That was real, too, apparently. I met the Avengers. In the flesh. Like, what? I lived with them, trained with them, ate with them, and fought beside them. That happened. Who knew that was something I could claim? And if that is true, could I go back again, and would they remember me?

Probably, it isn't every day you meet someone who can play with time, is it? Maybe it isn't something so out of the ordinary in the Avenger's lives.

If I did say yes to Wanda and agree to take her back in time, where and when would we go? She never speaks much about her past, but I do know the facts from having had read her file. Parents died when she was young in Sokovia, and her twin died during the battle of Sokovia. And then there's the Vision. There's a small, unwelcome, ugly feeling when my thoughts fall to him. I push it aside, deciding to ignore it. He died in Wakanda, before the snap. Which one of those would Wanda want to return to?

I have to finally stop running, my breath not able to catch up with me so I bend over, my hands on my thighs, panting, waiting for it to return. The air is cool, cooler than anticipated, and it burns my throat as I gulp in big breaths. I look around, trying to orient myself. To my surprise, I've ended up on the cli side I found Wanda and the woman on last night. I quickly look to where I saw the woman lying last, half expecting her to still be there in the same position as last, but I'm alone as far as I can tell. I chastise myself for not checking on the woman last night, but then again I was more concerned with Wanda. I still haven't asked her about who the woman is, but maybe that's not important anymore.

I decide to stay on the cli side a while longer, figuring I'll give Wanda some more space. I sit down, leaning my back against a big rock, which worryingly has a little something that looks a lot like blood splatter on it. I quickly forget about that though, looking out over the valley below. I can easily see the cabin from up here as the sun is still up, despite being shrouded by thick, grey clouds which look like they would happily open up and let the rain wash down on us here below. I feel so small and alone up here and I'm surprised to find that as much as I felt trapped down in the cabin with Wanda, that is where I would much rather be. That's another issue I feel too overwhelmed by to deal with. What the hell is going on with me and my relationship with Wanda? For all the time I've known her, I've enjoyed her company (whenever we haven't been trying to injure each other), finding her increasingly interesting and wanting to know more about her, but since her meltdow on this very cli side... since last night I've had some worrying feelings pop up, some I don't even want to name, afraid that will solidify them and make them real. No, best not do that. I may feel like I know Wanda, but honestly, what do I know? There's one thing I can be certain of, and that's that she still clearly lives in the past. And I'm not her past. I'm not her anything but perhaps her present and maybe soon someone of the past too. What I definitely am not and cannot be is her present.

I hug my knees into my chest, trying myself it's the cold that's making me shiver and feel so terrible. Maybe I should just try to find my car somewhere down below, shrouded by the thick trees, and just drive away. Leave all of this in the past and let the memories slowly fog over until I cannot really tell what was real anymore. If all I can be to Wanda is someone that she feels keeps her from happiness, then I do not want to stick around. Anyway, there's well enough shit to deal with back at home to keep me occupied for a while. The thought of going back and never seeing Wanda again hovers over me like a dark cloud, and instantly drains me of any form of happiness. But if that's what it takes...

Then again, I could stay. I could stay, and I could give her what she wants of me. I could relent and bring her back to her loved ones, and maybe I could stay in her orbit a while longer. I might even actually be able to help my own family. I might even hug my niece again and hear her laughter and have my grandmother give me advice again. I won't be alone, and neither will Wanda. Our two lost souls will finally not be lost anymore, we will have found our soulmates. We won't be together in our loneliness anymore.

My heart hammers slightly quicker. I did do it before. Maybe I actually could do it again. I have no idea how to channel my power and how to actually get let alone myself that far back in time but also someone else, but maybe... And if Wanda's by my side to help me, she's the Scarlet Witch anyway, I'm certain she doesn't really need much of my help. And maybe, just maybe we were always meant to do it.

I hop up, my mind and heart racing. I take one last look at the view, but all I can focus on is the tiny structure of the cabin down below. I have to try. For her. She deserves every chance she has at some happiness. I can't be someone that takes that from her. Envisaged, I start jogging back down the steep mountain, my descent so much quicker than the last time I did it with Wanda hanging over me. I gracefully hop over boulders and duck under trees, my heart pounding so much harder than necessary.

I sprint the last of the stretch towards the cabin, my excitement now boundless. Wanda emerges from inside, looking slightly alarmed, her hair now in a half-up-half-down do and a long, gray cardigan wrapped around her.

"What happened? Are you okay? Where did you go?" She questions me as I hopped up the stairs to meet her on the porch. Her voice has no trace le of her previous irritability. "I couldn't feel you, and then I could again, and your thoughts -I can't make sense."

"Yes." I gasp out, too out of breath to be able to form any coherent words other than that breathy one-syllable word.

Wanda's lips part slightly and she looks at me in concern, her brows furrowing. I laugh and in my excitement pull her into a rough hug. She doesn't hug me back and so I let her go.

"Livvy."

"Let's try, Wanda." I croak and she blinks, trying to keep up with me. I realize I should probably elaborate some instead of standing there, grinning like a mad person. "I'll do it."

"What?" She grimaces. "What are you talking about? What happened?"

"Oh my god, Wanda!" I laugh at her not understanding, being too concerned with if I'm okay to figure it out. "Let's go back."

Wanda actually gasps this time, her eyes widening in shock as she slaps her right hand over her mouth.

"I'll do it." I repeat nodding, willing for her to share in my excitement. She splutters something not understandable under her hand, her expression still puzzled whilst her eyes look questioning at me.

"Oh my god, say something!" I squeak, not able to take it anymore and my resolve starting to crumble, slightly, the cracks letting in that same old doubt.

"I just-" She finally regains her voice and her hand drops to her side. "I didn't- are you sure?"

"I am. We have to try, if we can. For them." I insist and she scrunches up her face. "That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Livvy." She whimpers and suddenly I'm in her embrace, her hair tickling the side of my face.

"You're happy, you want to do this, right? I don't know if I can, but I'll try." I worry into her hair and she squeezes me tighter, like she's trying to reassure me through her hug before easing up and pulling back to look at me again, her hands sneaking their way up my arms onto my shoulders until she's hanging onto the back of my neck, looking into my eyes with such intensity I think I might burst into a flame, not unlike her magic in colour.

"You're sure about this?" I question her again in but a whisper and she lets out a so laugh and nods, her eyes glossy again. "Alright. Ok, let's turn back time."

A/N: Chapter 40 is going to be intense, y'all. Just letting you know to get ready! Again, thank you to everyone who's been adding this to their reading lists and to everyone for voting AND for your comments, they're so fun to read! Where in time do you think we're going to end up? And what characters would you like to make an appearance??

Alright, catch you on the flipside, literally!