**Chapter 40** "Alright, are you ready?" Wanda's eyes are shimmering with excitement in the low visibility of the inside of the dark, wooden cabin. á "I mean, normally I can't really, you know, with someone looking at me..." I joke awkwardly, trying to lighten the air a little bit. Wanda chuckles and shu les slightly closer to me on the couch, so that the both of us are sitting cross-legged, our knees now touching. "Don't worry, it happens to everyone." Wanda winks at me and I actually feel myself blushing, and I hope she can't tell in the relatively dim lighting. a "Seriously, though," I divert the conversation, my voice trembling ever so slightly with nerves. "I don't have a clue what the hell I'm supposed to do." "You've done it before." Wanda tries to comfort me, but it doesn't quite appease the butterflies flying around my chest, making me feel all jittery like I've just chugged five co ees. Instead, it almost makes me feel more nervous, if possible. "On accident, and it was just me. I didn't try to go back in time, it just happened!" I squeak and Wanda shakes her head. "But you did try in Romania when you tried to find me." Wanda corrects me, placing a steady hand on my knee. I look down at her hand. She's placing all her hope on me; I have to stop dancing around and just get on with it. "You're right. Let's just do this, or else I might puke. Or faint." I smile awkwardly at Wanda, who I know notices my nerves, but she must be feeling slightly nervous herself, as she doesn't point it out or make a joke. "Remember what I told you. Connect to it, it's in you and a part of you. You just have to focus it. You'll be amazing. I'll be right here." I feel pressured by the trust she's putting in me, but I've decided to give it a go, and I cannot back down now that I've gotten her hopes "Alright. Um. I guess I'll just uh, do it, then?" I blubber and she nods, smiling her stupid supportive little smile. Oh god. "Here." Wanda extends her hands out in front of her towards me. "Take my hands. It might be easier." I nod and shakily put my hands in hers and her warm fingers close around my slightly cold ones. My stomach lurches, but I tell myself it's the nerves. I'm about to turn back time, for god sake. "Breathe." Wanda so ly tells me and makes an e ort to breathe out visibly so I can follow her breathing. "Good. That's it. Close your eyes." I do, feeling like I'm twelve, holding hands with my cr- no, I'm not going there. Breathe. Focus This is serious. á "Ok, that's good, Liv, keep breathing. Now feel your magic, connect to it, it's right there with you." Wanda whispers and I look inward, instantly feeling the buzz of energy just below my skin. "Good." Wanda's voice breaks slightly with excitement and I know she must see the silvery wisps of my magic start to appear around our hands. "Focus on what I told you. Focus on you and me. I'm right here. Bring us back." I frown, willing my magic to move freely, looking for that same feeling of pure energy I felt in the square. My magic happily complies and I feel it swirl around in every vein of my body, completely inhabiting me and I feel my hands slightly shake in Wanda's as I try to keep the energy going. Wanda's hands squeeze tightly around mine, holding me in place. Come on, come on... I start to feel a slight buzzing in my ears and I know I'm close now, I just have to push a little further... the buzzing grows louder and I will myself to keep thoughts of Wanda on the forefront of my mind. I have no idea what I'm doing, but I keep going. Wanda told me about a specific time she wanted us to go back to, right in the middle of the battle of Sokovia. I obviously do not have any recollection of that moment as she's the only one who lived it, but she's told me enough for me to hopefully be able to visualize it well enough. Wanda. Sokovia. Pietro. Wanda. Sokovia. Pietro... A flash of white-hot pain zaps through my head like I've been hit in the head with something really hard. I gasp and my hands let go of Wanda's and feel them begin to slip from my grasp almost like there's a force pushing them apart. I begin panicking, opening my eyes to only see a flurry of the misty substance flowing around me in uneven motions. "Wanda!" I will myself to yell out, but the buzzing in my ears washes over me like a tidal wave and it's so overwhelming I just want it all to stop. I fret, trying to close my fingers around Wanda's and feel her try to do the same. My center of gravity changes and I've completely lost track of where I am trying to get us to, now feeling blinding panic at the prospect of losing Wanda midst moving through time. What if I actually lose her and she's stuck who knows where and I cannot find her? The pain in my head is still mounting and I feel so overwhelmed I could puke, or faint, but none of those options takes place. A small zap of scarlet briefly appears, but it is drowned by the mist quickly, the flame exhausting itself almost like it doesn't have the will to fight. That scares me even more and I blindly grasp at Wanda's hands. I could swear I hear Wanda yell out for me, but her voice sounds oddly distorted and far away. I feel like sobbing, wishing I never agreed to this madness. Why the hell did I think this was going to work? I'm not like Wanda, I can't use magic and this is all insane and I just wish I was somewhere safe and this wasn't real. My vision starts going dark and I know I'm about to faint, my entire body screaming in pain like the mist is trying to tear me apart from the inside. Just make it stop. I desperately beg over and over, silently begging, and the darkness takes over, and stop it does, as quickly as the flash of pain began, it subsides, leaving to trace of itself except a dull throbbing in I feel my muscles all begin to very slowly relax, feeling as taunt as though they had just carried me through a grueling marathon. The electricity in me slowly and menacingly retreats further into me until I can just feel its slow stirrings, lazy and still. I know something's happened, but I don't dare to open my eyes just yet, feeling so incredibly out of it I don't know if I could tell up from down. I hold my breath. Where's Wanda? I can't feel her hands in mine. The familiar feeling of adrenaline pumping through me begins again as I silently begin to panic, my hands so cold and empty. Then, I hear someone groan somewhere on my le, cutting through the white noise still ringing in my ears from the roaring noise which earlier assaulted me. Then, tentatively a hand comes to rest on my forearm and it clumsily travels down to my hand, giving me a small squeeze. It takes so much e ort for me to squeeze it back. She's here. That must be her. I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding, and push open my eyes in dread, not knowing what I'll be met with. Wanda's face floats over mine, her skin eerily pale against her tousled hair. Her lips are moving, but I can't hear her. I blink lazily, trying to stop her face from going in and out of focus. This is not what happened last time I went back. Something's wrong. A squeeze of my hand brings me back to try to focus on Wanda. She looks so concerned. What happened? I can't move, my body is too heavy. I blink again, feeling like I might puke any second. Wanda places a warm hand on my cheek, her brows furrowed as her eyes scan my face, her lips still moving, and I can now make out a little bit of her voice through the ringing in my ears, but I cannot understand what she's saying. I open my mouth to say something, I don't know what and the sound that leaves my lips mirrors that indecision. Wanda pats my cheek and then tests my forehead, looking around herself and her expression makes icy claws around my heart squeeze harshly. "-Livvy please get up." I hear Wanda say; she's now looking down at me again. The white noise zooms in and out and I squeeze my eyes shut, a wave of nausea crashing over me. "Liv, I don't know where we are." I force my eyes open again, and look around; my vision is not quite back to normal, making everything seem like a weirdly distorted oil painting. I realize I should be able to hear sounds I would have imagined would be prevalent during as huge a fight as the one in Sokovia, but I don't. "What can I do?" Wanda's voice makes me focus on her again. "Not good." I manage to croak out, which clearly is not something Wanda wanted to hear. "Can you sit up for me?" She questions carefully, her eyes scanning my body, clearly looking for any visible signs of trauma. I nod, instantly regretting the movement as it aggravates the weird fluidity of my surroundings. Wanda tries to help me up to sitting anyway, and I'm grateful for her guiding hands as I don't know if I honestly could tell which way I should be aiming to li myself, feeling like gravity is pulling at me from everywhere at once "How are you feeling?" Wanda's voice reaches me and I groan, my eyes closed. "Like I've just really messed up." đ "I don't know what happened." Wanda says, her voice sounding small. "I kept being pulled away from you, and I couldn't even use my scarlet. Everything hurt." "I'm sorry." I apologize, squeezing my eyes shut, feeling horrible for inadvertently hurting her. "It's not your fault. Are you hurt?" "Just feeling a tad fragile." I try to smile something akin to a placating smile, but I know it must come o as more of a grimace to Wanda. "It's getting better." "Do you know where we are, Liv? Can you open your eyes for me?" I groan but do as I'm told. My vision is still wonky, and the sight that meets my eyes makes me close them instantly, my face burning up in shame and a new wave of nausea. "Oh, my god." I stutter utterly horrified, opening my eyes just slightly to peer at Wanda. "What is this?" Wanda questions me breathily, looking around us in total confusion. "This is not Sokovia." "No, it isn't." I agree, closing my eyes shut tightly again, not baring to look at Wanda or our surroundings. "What?" She slowly asks, aiming the question out into the room and not so much at me. "This is where I ended up last time, too." I murmur, my innards now made out of ice, every single bit of me wanting to sink into the floor in shame. "What?" Wanda repeats again, now directed at me. "Livvy, please look at me, you're scaring me." "I'm so sorry." I groan and look at her pale face, placing my hands over my face. "Where are we, Liv?" Wanda snaps, and I feel the weight of her leave the cheap mattress we've landed on. "I'm so sorry." I repeat, still not baring to take in our surroundings, not really believing this happened. How did this happen?? "Liv." Wanda's fingers gently but firmly wrap themselves around my wrists and pull my hands o my face, forcing me to face her. All it does is just make my face burn up in shame. "We're in my fucking dorm room. Again." I admit and confusion flashes across Wanda's face as she takes in what I've just told her. a "What?" She repeats, again, her fingers slightly letting go, her hands sliding down my wrist as she straightens, turning around in the small room I've revisited enough to last a lifetime now. "When I went back last, this is where I woke up." I tell her and she briefly looks back at me before taking a few steps around the room, examining her surroundings, looking very out of place. a "How did- you did focus on what I told you?" She whirls around to look at me sternly. "Hey, don't start! I told you I couldn't do this!" I defend myself and she hu s. 'I'm sorry. I just - I'm confused.' "That makes two of us." I groan, feeling a little more steady now. "You said -your dorm room?" Wanda faces me again, her brain clearly struggling to comprehend her situation. "As in colleg@" "Yes." I sigh. "Can't escape fucking college. Fucking hell!" "Alright, calm down, it's fine." Wanda quickly returns to me, crouching down lower to fix me with those eyes again. "Are you feeling better?" "Stop fussing -I'm fabulous." I snap at her, misdirecting my fear at her. "Sorry." "What do we do?" Wanda wonders, looking around, doubt etched across her face. I look around, noting the slight dierences in my old dorm room as opposed to the last time I jumped back in time. Wanda gets up to look around too. It's definitely my room (the tacky posters of various singers definitely belong to me; no one else would put Maggie Rogers next to Justin Bieber next to Queen). I wish Wanda would stop looking around -and I wish college-me would have cleaned her room. "What's this?" Wanda turns around, holding a magazine with none other than Captain America on the cover. She smirks at me and I feel like puking again. Great. I was -or am in my Captain America phase. "My friend's." I mutter, not finding the cover nearly as amusing as Wanda. "Of course." She tilts her head, looking down at the cover. "I would have thought you were more of an Iron Man fan." "I am no one's fan!" I counter and Wanda chuckles, putting the magazine down. "Or maybe the Black Widow was more your speed." a "No one's my speed! Stop, I'm still feeling ill." I try, my head does indeed still pound dully, but Wanda seemingly is finding me to be well enough as she continues to tease. "If I look into these drawers, will I find a magazine with me on it?" a "You will absolutely not find anything with you on it. Can you take this seriously?" I sigh, leaning back against the cool wall and a Miley Cyrus poster... "You are feeling ill if you're telling me to take things seriously." Wanda titters and I audibly groan at her. "Alright, you're right. I am slightly disappointed though, I thought I knew you! What did you do last time you were here? Except fawning over Steve, of course." "I did not-" I stop myself, seeing her expression. "I guess we should get out and see where in time we are." "Can you stand?" Wanda approaches me, her face serious again. "I think so." I grimace, unsteadily getting on my feet with Wanda's help. "Can I help?" Wanda questions me and I notice a little scarlet in her "No." I grunt, not wanting her to think I'm weak or something. "Alright." The scarlet in her irises retreats, giving way to green instead. We cautiously make our way down the empty hallway, me leaning slightly against Wanda's shoulder as I still feel like I am on a rocking boat. There's no one around -classes must be on. The first person we see is wearing headphones and rushes past us in the opposite direction, not giving us a second look. We have to walk all the way outside until we meet people again, getting out onto the busy street slightly further away from the campus. I realize no one must be around campus as it seems to be rather late, the streetlights are on and the sky is dark. I get a weird feeling in the pit of my stomach for some reason, being out at night. I tell myself it must be the a ershock of my using my powers wrongly as I certainly have been out at night in New York before. Wanda tries to get someone to stop a couple of times, but this being New York, no one does. "Sorry, can you-" Wanda begins once again, as the man whose attention she's trying to get only casts her a glance without stopping. "Hey, asshole!" I finally burst out, not being able to watch Wanda struggle anymore. The man stumbles slightly, looking up at me with a stunned expression. "What's today's date?" "Seventh." He mutters and tries to walk away. "What month and year dumbass?" I shout a er him and he hurries to regain some speed to get away from me. "August 2014." "Thank you!" I shout a er him and he rushes o without a second glance back. "2014." Wanda quietly echoes next to me and that's when it hits me. Not only are we on the wrong side of the world; we're not even in the right year. I wobble slightly, my equilibrium failing me slightly but Wanda's hand zaps out to catch me and I swear a small flash of scarlet appears. "Alright, I'll just, um..." I begin uncertainly. "I'll just try again." "What? No!" Wanda quickly stops me, placing a hand on my arm to stop me from doing anything. "Wanda, we're-" "I know, but you're not trying anything else. You're still not okay." She firmly tells me, trying to sound assertive but I can still hear the slight fright in her voice. "Who knows what could happen if you try it again in this state." "Well, what do you suggest? That we just take a stroll and get a co ee?" I ask her snakily and her eyes darken slightly. "I messed up, we need to get away from here as fast as we can; we cannot risk changing anything." "I know, but I am not letting you try anything again! We almost got separated the first time, and you ended up... well, like this! And that was when you felt fine trying. I'm not risking it." Wanda explains, her hand on my arm clamping down. "OK, fine!" I hu, exasperated. I look around, trying to come up with a plan. A bus rolls by, an ad for Interstellar on its side. The sight of it makes me almost want to laugh. "Oh, fuck." I mutter under my breath and Wanda turns to look at me. "What?" She asks, her eyebrows furrowed again in concern. "Are you "Yes, yes. It's nothing." I say, watching the bus roll away. "Alright, we need to come up with a plan." "Should we go back to your room?" Wanda asks uncertainly. "Tempting." I joke and she shoots me a look that tells me now is not the time. "No, we can't, what if I see me? We have to stay under the radar till we can try again." 'Alright, so..." Wanda says, looking around, and despite knowing she is perfectly capable of taking care of herself, she looks so small I just want to wrap my arms around her. I resist though, and join her in looking around. "Eh, co ee?" I ask her, and she looks at me to discern whether I was joking or not. "Don't mind me, but I've just used quite a lot of energy, I wouldn't say no to some ca eine." "Alright." Wanda relents and her grip around my arm finally so ens, but she still doesn't let go completely. "There's a co ee shop just a block away, should be open this time." I say, thinking back to the late nights I've spent trying to get a pick-meup from the place. "A stroll and a co ee it is then." Wanda says and it is my turn to shoot her an unamused look. She just shakes her head and snakes her arm around mine and we start towards the co ee shop. It must be quite late, as there aren't a lot of people around. A few cars pass us, but otherwise, the street is quiet. The uneasy feeling I had earlier returns, but I push it down. Still, I feel a shiver run down my spine. I subconsciously touch the small of my back, where I've had the foresight to at least strap on my Glock. The feeling of it under my fingertips reassures me slightly. As we round a corner I feel my pulse quicken as I lay eyes upon a group of people lounging about near a corner shop just about fi y meters before the co ee shop. The group is chatting animatedly amongst themselves and yet I wish we could cross the road to walk alongside the other sidewalk, and yet we don't. I feel Wanda's grip tighten around me a little, but she stays silent. We approach the group, one of the members of the posse now laying eyes on us, and just as I hoped he wouldn't, he whistles. "Well, hello ladies." He says and on cue, the rest of the group turns around to see who he's talking to. "Damn, fam." Another one exclaims. "Keep walking." I murmur to Wanda, whose movements have become sti. "Where we o to tonight?" The first guy steps out in front of us, blocking our path and forcing us to stop. "Sorry, not interested." I say and he makes an exaggerated motion to indicate his extreme shock and indignation at my words. I just stare at "Wow, okay bitch." He spits, then turns towards Wanda. "What about you, red?" a "Do you mind getting out of the way." I speak, reframing my question into a statement, my voice flat. "Wasn't talking to you, piece of work. Huh, red, feel like having a party?" The guy takes a step towards Wanda and I instantly drop her arm, stepping out in between them, wobbling slightly, the darker part of the street we're in proving slightly too di icult for my brain to visualize. "Oh, jealous?" The guy purrs and the rest of his gang laughs. "No. Step away." I try to keep my voice steady as I hear it tremble slightly in anger. "What? What are you going to do, huh? Fucking bitch." He steps even closer and actually gives me a shove. My reflexes aren't quite there, so I miss blocking his hands and I stumble back into Wanda at his shove. "Hey, stop it!" Wanda half-shouts, her accent creeping in just so slightly. "Come on red. We just want to have a good time." Another guy now feels bold enough to approach us. "Fuck right o ." I growl and the men leer. "We're planning to." One of them says and they all laugh. My stomach twists as I try to keep them all in my line of sight, cursing my spinning vision. Wanda's hands steady me from behind. "Come on, stop being teases. Why else would you be out alone this late, huh?" A voice purrs from somewhere behind us and suddenly Wanda's hands leave my back and I stumble again, not being able to lean on her. I whirl around to see her jolt away from two guys who've walked up to her, right into her personal space. "Stop. I won't say it again." She growls, but the men do not seem deterred at all. "Mm, sounds good baby." "Okay assholes, I've got a gun!" I shout, clumsily drawing my Glock, never feeling more grateful towards it as the two men next to Wanda pause to look up at me in surprise. "I'm a Federal Agent, so if you don't-" I suddenly twist to the side, my stomach finally having had enough and I puke onto the sidewalk, feeling my knees shake. The men just laugh all around me and I feel worse than before, really struggling to stay upright. "Liv-" I hear Wanda's voice from somewhere beyond some sort of fog and I suddenly hit the ground, not really feeling any pain, just suddenly finding myself on the ground, looking at amorphous pairs of shoes. One of the shoes kick forwards and hit me in the stomach, making me curl up in a ball on the cold ground, laughter echoing around me. I hear Wanda's voice again, but I can't really make out what she's saying. A rough pair of hands grab me and li me up. I'm not as out of it as to think they're actually helping me up, as they roughly yank me backward. I hear Wanda's voice again amongst the spinning noises and colors and shapes and then there's a sharp flash of red and a very loud crash and the hands holding me disappear and I stumble downwards until I'm stopped by a so tickling red light, which carefully lowers me down onto the ground as shouting ensues and more scarlet flashes around me. WandaJs the only thing I can think which makes sense to me. A warm wave rushes through me and I hear Wanda's voice in my head, her emotions lightly tickling mine, her anger rough as needles poking around. I'm fine. I grunt, trying to push myself o the ground, but not quite managing, so I stay slouching, my legs spread out in front of me. I must look so stupid right now, but I don't really have the energy to do anything. The world around me has stopped spinning slightly, and I notice my surroundings are quiet now, devoid of the screaming and crashing which just echoed around. "W-Wanda?" I stutter, li ing my heavy head to look around me. "Shit." I shake my head, trying to see more clearly. "I'm here, darling." Wanda's voice reaches me before I feel her crouch down next to me, a hand on my back. "Are you okay?" "I feel like I'm drunk." I tell her honestly, drunk being the closest experience I can liken to my current state. "I'm ok. Where did they go?" a "They're gone." Wanda's voice is dark and heavy. "I may have been a

little too forceful. Oops."

"What? Why?" Wanda's face swims into view.

"I'll be fine." I mutter, feeling self-conscious.

make out, the lights of the city twinkling too much.

"What?" I ask her but she doesn't acknowledge me.

which sounds oddly familiar, but I cannot place it.

to us...

"I'm sorry."

"I couldn't help."

clammy skin.

what's that?"

"I didn't need your help."
"I know, but I should've-"

I don't know what she's referring to, but honestly, I doubt she was too forceful. I don't mind at all, the thought of what could have happened

"Livvy, stop worrying so much! I should be the one worrying!" Wanda touches my cheek, her hand warm and dry against my cold and

"You're getting worse!" Wanda keeps fretting. "We should -wait,

She pauses, going still as she's looking o at something I cannot

"Is that-" She slowly begins and I hear a so whirring of machines

"I don't know if you knew, but it's not New Year's, we don't set o fireworks quite yet." None other than Tony Stark's sarcastic voice sounds through what I assume is his Iron Man helmet. "Who are you?

A/N: Thanks for all the likes and comments on the last chapter! This one was quite long, sorry about that! But we're getting back into the

Continue reading next part  $\Box$ 

a

"Stark" Wanda asks loudly, her voice sounding surprised.

I've just had dinner, I am honestly not in the mood to fight."

action, oh Lordy! Tony's back!!! Until next time, darlings! x