## **Chapter 43**

Stark, and by extension, I suspect, Natasha, keeps Wanda and me locked up in the hospital room for the entire night. I assume the trio are debating what to do with us instead of going to bed, but it doesn't seem like any of them really do need much sleep anyway. I, on the other hand, am a di erent story. Even having been given extra fluids to try to help my body recuperate from the time-travel, I feel way drowsier than normal and find myself dri ing o into deep sleep, just to be woken up several times during the night with the room spinning around me. Wanda stays on her side of the uncomfortable bed the entire night, and she doesn't complain each time I jerk awake. She only rearranges the covers or the pillows underneath my head and snuggles up next to me until I fall asleep again -which doesn't take too long. Each time I awaken in the dark room, I get a feeling that Wanda is just lying there, not sleeping at all. I'm too tired to ask her, though, so we spend the night like that, repeating the same patterns over and over again until eventually, the sun rises. I awaken feeling clammy again, and for the first time, Wanda isn't right next to me. The realization thereof, or the lack of her warm body next to me makes me shiver as I turn slightly to try to find her in the small, sterile room, wondering if she's managed to get out and le me. My doubts are proven to be just that though, as my eyes fall upon her sitting on a chair, her back towards me, knees drawn up towards her chest and her arms hugging her legs close to her chest as she looks out of the window. The so morning light strokes her skin amorously, making her glow slightly, her hair as ever looking like it is filled with sparkling rubies. From my vantage point, I can only see some of her face, but I can instantly tell she looks sad. My heart sinks as it always seems to do nowadays when I see her like this. She's resting her head on her knees, her lashes ever so so ly occasionally batting down as she blinks. I follow her gaze, looking out onto an awakening New York City from where we are up high in the clouds, it feels like. I look back at Wanda, feeling her to be much more interesting to look at than whatever is going on outside, down below. I wish I could summon up the strength -or the courage, to get o this stupid bed and walk up to her and hug her and try to take some of her sadness away. But, if grief suits anyone, it suits Wanda like an expensive perfume. Wanda sighs, completely unaware that I've woken up. She traps her bottom lip between her teeth, chewing on it in contemplation, lost in whatever world she's concocted inside her head. I stare, forgetting that I am staring, and I briefly wonder what it would feel like to hold her, to kiss her. I don't like to live in a world of what-ifs, though, and knowing what I know about Wanda, thoughts like the ones I've found myself starting to allow to materialize lately exist solely in that world of what if. And yet, they keep coming to me like small little pricks of a needle, and I can't quite make myself stop. As if on cue, Wanda turns her head towards me, still gnawing on her lip. She catches my eyes and smiles when she sees that I'm awake, a motion that forces that stupid lip out from between her teeth. "Good morning." She greets me, her voice low a er the night of rest. "Mornin'" I mumble, embarrassed to have been caught staring and I sincerely hope she wasn't listening in on my thoughts just then. "Slept well?" Wanda enquires, hugging her knees slightly tighter towards her. "You know I didn't." I sigh and let my gaze dri back out of the window, as if that was what I was originally looking at. "I'm sorry for waking you." "You didn't." She replies so ly. She keeps her head turned towards me for a little while until she too, turns back to look out of the window. "I never spent much time here." She says, clearly resuming her train of thought from earlier. "I only lived in the Compound." "It must've been nicer." I say, thinking of how overwhelming it must be for Wanda to be in the middle of a buzzing city filled with millions of thoughts each clamoring for her attention. "This isn't too bad." She admits and I look back at her to read her expression. She has a small smile on her face; so small that I doubt I would have been able to detect it before knowing her. Now though, I find reading her so much easier than before. Once you know her tells, she's not as intimidating as she would have you think. Quite the opposite, actually. "Isn't it loud?" I ask her and she hums in thought. "It is." "Are you okay?" I frown, her reaction surprising me. I would have thought she would have been more stressed. "I am. Most of them are far enough from me that they're just a faint white noise. Through the night, I realized that I can tune them out if I just focus on you." Wanda admits and I blush again, feeling awkward. "On me?" I repeat and she laughs so ly. "Yes, on you." She tuns her head, resting it on her arm as she regards me, those green eyes of her acting like spotlights, always making me feel like the most important person in the world and the most scrutinized all at once. It's an odd feeling, but one which fills me with a sense not unlike adrenaline each time her spotlight falls on me. "I like the sound of your thoughts." Wanda continues, still looking at me. "They always cut through more easily, I don't have to look for you like I have to others." I don't know how to reply, still feeling a little at a loss when it comes to her ability to listen in on thoughts. I assume most people must feel very uncomfortable around her for that exact reason, but I know that's not what's bothering me about it. I know exactly what the reason for my discomfort is, but I will absolutely not think of it. No what-ifs. "What do I sound like?" I ask her instead to distract my train of thought, feeling genuinely curious about her answer. She narrows her eyes at me ever so slightly as she ponders my questions, clearly not being able to translate the feeling well enough for her own liking. "Maybe like a warm bath." She finally says, instantly scrunching up her nose in embarrassment at the admittance, her face blushing so ly. "A warm bath?" I repeat, at once surprised and at the same time not being able to resist slightly teasing her. "But mostly you sound like a shouting child-" She begins, trying to cover her tracks but I'm on her. "A warm, lovely bath... Hmm... Probably lavender-scented, loads of bubbles, with candles-" "I'm never telling you anything ever again." Wanda buries her face in her arms. "No need a er that revelation! A warm bath..." I smile at her, but she doesn't see. "You know, that's kind of what it feels like when you talk to me, too. In my head, I mean." I quickly add when she looks up with a grin on her face. "Oh?" "Yeah. I get, like, warm all over." I say, stumbling on my words slightly and now it's her time to gloat. "Warm all over?" She laughs, but not meanly, yet I still groan, regretting giving her the upper hand. 'Oh, don't." I try but she shakes her head, making her hair bounce happily around her face. "Warm all over... sounds like someone's in love." "Love?" I repeat and she goes still, waiting for my reaction. f!" Is what I manage, pouting at her. "Love, funny. As if." "Hmm." She hums, smiling a knowing smile which I don't like at all as she turns her head away from me towards the window again. "Silly." I tell the back of her head and she doesn't reply. I'm tempted to deflect further, but at that moment, the door to the room opens and I jump slightly, turning around to look at whoever's just entered. It's Steve. He smiles kindly, but his body language is slightly reserved, and I can instantly tell he's trying to appear calm and friendly, but that he doesn't really feel like that. "Morning, ladies." He says, looking from me to over my shoulder at Wanda. "Sorry about last night, you turning up was quite a surprise." He gives us another of his award-winning Captain America smiles. "Hope you slept well." "We did, thank you." Wanda replies, coming over to stand next to my bed, leaning one hand on the bed next to me. "Good, good." Steve nods. "Well, uh, Tony thought we might as well give you a room while you're here." "A room?" I repeat and Steve looks uncertain. "Yeah, I, uh, we assumed that-" "That's fine, Steve." Wanda interrupts him. "Thank you." I look as confused as Steve, looking from him to Wanda, who just shoots me a quick little look and the quickest wink. Oh lord. "Tony still hasn't found anything in your blood that would explain this." Steve looks at me with a face that screams sad puppy, despite him not having anything to feel sorry about; he doesn't even know me. "Oh, okay." Is all I say as Wanda shi s slightly next to me and I can all but feel the worry emanating from her. "I feel better now, anyway." I say to appease them, and it's not a complete lie. The room has stopped spinning, but I still doubt my legs will carry me as far as out of the room. "Well, I'm happy to show you to your room, if you want?" Steve suggests and I nod, happy to be out of the hospital-like room which makes me feel like I'm iller than I probably am. "Great, alright, I'll wait just outside." Steve tells us enthusiastically and turns to leave us alone. " Aroom?" I question Wanda doubtfully, emphasising the 'a'. "Well, we've already slept in the same bed before, and we both sleep better when we do, so why not." She shrugs as if it's no big deal. "Right." I say, still unconvinced, but I won't be the one to argue. "Can you make it o the bed?" Wanda asks me, borrowing her brows. "Yes, yes." I brush her o , looking down at my right arm which I just now remember is still connected to the IV. I rip o the tape holding the needle in place. "Liv, do-" Wanda begins but I already yank out the needle from my arm. "Don't worry, it's not my first." I smirk up at her worried face, thinking back to how I did the exact same thing when I woke up in the hospital a er Wanda giving herself up to S.W.O.R.D. for me. Wanda looks unamused but comes to help me steady myself nonetheless as I begin climbing o the bed. I struggle slightly, not wanting to lean on Wanda too much as to not tip her o to how uneasy I still feel. Eventually, though, I find my footing and we awkwardly make it out of the room into the hallway in which Steve is patiently waiting. "Wonderful." He smiles when seeing us, completely ignoring how I must indeed not look wonderful struggling to stay upright against Wanda. He leads us through the hallway and into some elevators which take us to the highest floor, which he explains requires a special code to reach. I of course know this already, but I don't comment on it, not wanting to make this weird situation even weirder for him. He leads us through another corridor lined with a few closed doors until we get to the last door, which he unlocks with a key, not unlike those hotels use. I note with a little glee that Stark's decided to give us the same room he gave me last time I visited, a year from now.

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"Welcome to your humble abode." Steve says, stepping aside, ever the gentleman, to let us in first. "Oh, and Stark asked me to remind you again, sorry - no magic indoors." I chuckle as Wanda helps me into the room, and Steve follows us. The room looks untouched, no doubt being cleaned to the highest of standards by Stark's team. It feels odd returning, and yet oddly reassuring. Wanda helps me to sit down on the huge bed without asking, which I am grateful for; I don't think I could muster the strength to stay upright for a lot longer. I watch from the sidelines as Steve gives Wanda a tour, not needing to pay too much attention as it all is clear in my memory.

"Anything else you need?" Steve asks Wanda, who shakes her head.

"Oh, wait, actually." She changes her mind. "Where can we wash our

"Oh." Steve looks around, looking like he's expecting, or rather,

hoping for a washer to suddenly appear. "I'll, uh, talk to Tony."

"Thank you, Steve." Wanda smiles warmly at him, clearly trying to

Steve, still clearly thinking of Wanda as a stranger, merely politely

"I'll see you later." He says before closing the door behind him.

I look at Wanda who is staring at the place she last saw Steve in the

being treated like a stranger by the people she thought of as family.

"You can't just magic-clean our clothes?" I ask her, trying to come up

doorway, clearly looking slightly distraught by the fact that she's

with something to distract her, not liking the way her sadness is

"Huh?" She turns to look at me like she's forgotten I'm still sitting

there. "Oh, right, I don't know. Probably. I don't want to become

clothes?"

reassure him.

nods back before turning to leave.

creeping in on her again.

her lashes.

from my ribs for a while now.

"Can you, now?" She challenges.

smoke following her hand.

"No magic." I repeat Stark's rule to her.

"Oops." She smirks.

stomach twists.

her head.

"No fun." Wanda tuts, poking me again.

lazy." "Right. You know, your powers are wasted on you." I tell her dryly. "I would never get o my butt if I had your powers." "Good thing you don't." Her smile returns. Score. "Ah, the good I could do." I sigh, letting myself fall down on the so pillows of the bed which probably cost more than my shoebox apartment I could barely scrape enough money together to a ord to buy. "Never again having to do the dishes..." "I like doing the dishes!" Wanda acutely disagrees, suddenly plopping down on the bed next to me, making the mattress shi slightly under her weight as she lies down on her side. "Insane, woman." I laugh. "Who likes doing the dishes!?" Wanda shrugs, her lower lip between her teeth again as she leans her

head down on her hand as she lies on her side, looking at me through

"Well, I'll forever delegate all my dishes to you knowing this crucial

piece of information." I continue my bit in order to distract myself.

"How kind of you." She pokes me in the side and I recoil from her.

"Don't- my ribs-" I exclaim, although I haven't had any complaints

"Hey!" I laugh. "I might be ill but I can give it as good as I get it."

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"Don't try me, Maximo ." She narrows her eyes and li s a finger towards me. "I warn you-" She goes to tickle me again, but I grab her finger in one hand, my training kicking in without having to even think of it. Wanda looks surprised, clearly not having expected me to be able to stop her. "What now?" I ask her triumphantly holding up her trapped finger in my hand in front of her face. She smiles and a small electric shock zaps me and I open my hand in

surprise, letting her slip her finger out of my grasp, a trail of red

"Who's going to tell him?" She asks me in a low voice and my

"I for one wouldn't risk his anger." I stutter and she smiles, shaking

"It's not him you should worry about." I raise my eyebrows at her and she tilts her head slightly, and I don't miss how her eyes flit down to my lips and back up to my eyes again. I notice her breathe slightly quicker, her lips parted slightly. No whatifs. She looks down at my mouth again and the mattress shi s slightly as she quietly wiggles slightly closer to me. I'm scared to do anything, waiting to see what she's doing, scared I am completely misinterpreting the entire situation, but suddenly all there is in the world is her in front of me, and my body seems to want nothing more than for me to conquer the space between us. No what-ifs?My chest

flutters as I meet her sparkling eyes again. She's managed to remove

the distance that was separating us, the arm she's resting her head on

meet her eyes, which seem to have taken on a darker shade of green.

"Fuck!" I exclaim as a small finger suddenly makes contact with my

"Oh, honey, so easily distracted. I thought they'd have taught you

"Fuck you, Maximo ." I try to hu, but can't help myself but laugh and

"Hm." She says and pokes me again, a cheeky smile plastered over

now right next to my head, making me have to look up slightly to

Her tongue darts out to wet her lips, and then-

side and Wanda laughs breathily.

better, agent."

she smirks.

her face. A/N: Sorry for the wait! Hope you liked this one! Next chapter we'll be back to our regular break-my-heart-action-packed stu;) **Continue reading next part** □