Chapter 44

a

a

a

ď

a

ď⁵

a

đ

a

a3

ď

a

a

a

I wake up with a slight jolt, feeling like someone just slapped me awake. It takes a second for me to orient myself, my eyes struggling to gain focus in the shadowy room. Then I remember where I am and I relax. I turn my head to the side. Wanda's sleeping on her side, facing me, her hands lying still in between us. I watch her sleep for a moment, letting my heart rate fall. I wonder what she's dreaming about. Her eyelids move ever so slightly, otherwise, she's completely still, looking totally relaxed. Goddamn it; even this darkness suits her, her porcelain skin smooth in the lack of light, her freckles barely visible. I resist the urge to cuddle up against her and wake her up. She needs her sleep, I remind myself. Instead, I carefully push the su ocating covers o me and silently leave the bed. I turn and look at Wanda to make sure I haven't woken her up. She frowns slightly in her sleep, her right hand twitching slightly, but then she settles and her face goes smooth again. Her lips part and she sighs. I again resist the urge to get as close to her as I possibly can and tiptoe to the door, grabbing the cold handle and opening it with a so click. I feel steady on my feet, so decide to get down to the kitchen to make some tea, hoping to soothe my throat which feels scratchy. I leave the door to our room slightly ajar, wanting to make the least amount of noise I can. I easily remember the route to the kitchen from my last visit. The Tower is plunged in darkness and no one is in sight. The floor is cold under my bare feet, but it feels rather nice as I feel like I am burning up. I somehow still manage to shiver, wearing only some oversized shirt and shorts Wanda found in the closet. The kitchen is bathed in a dim orange glow from the lights of the city outside, the huge window letting the light in nicely. I catch my pale reflection in the mirror, looking away quickly, not wanting to see myself looking most probably awful. Instead, I walk towards the kitchen which I remember always being completely stocked to the brim with anything you could think of. I try to think of some food I could eat, but the thought of it makes me feel slightly ill, so I abandon the thought and instead go to prepare the tea. The water comes to a quick boil in Stark's kettle and I find some honey which I apply a generous amount of into the swiveling water. I grab the mug and walk towards the window, thinking I can at least entertain myself with watching New York. I lean against the cool window, resting my burning forehead against the cool material. I observe the occasional ant-sized car hundreds of meters below me as I absentmindedly li the teabag from the string up and down. 'None for me?" A low, raspy voice asks and I jump slightly, surprised as a pair of arms sneak themselves around my waist and Wanda rests her head on my shoulder. I must've been so deep in thought I didn't hear her approach. I look up, watching her reflection in the window. Her eyes meet mine. "How are you feeling?" She whispers, her breath tickles my neck, making me shiver again. "I thought you were asleep." I say, ignoring her question, not wanting to lie to her. "Can't sleep without you, remember?" Her voice is so and her arms tighten slightly around my waist. Jesus. "I'm sorry." "Don't apologize. Not to me, remember?" I chuckle so ly, my heart feeling like it might burst into a thousand butterflies. I wonder if it's a side e ect of whatever's wrong with me. Wanda hums in response, her chest vibrating against my back, making the butterflies go completely mad. "It's beautiful, isn't it?" "It is." I agree, looking out at the thousands of twinkling lights in the dark. We fall into a comfortable silence, Wanda not pleasing me. I'm surprised at her closeness, but I don't comment on it. I instead find myself leaning back against her, my head coming to rest against hers on my shoulder. For once I'm thankful for not feeling great, as it makes my brain feel fuzzy and slow, and it's struggling to start overanalyzing every single little movement I feel Wanda make against me. My heart doesn't seem a ected though, as it seems to believe I must be in the middle of running a race, beating furiously against my chest, so loud I am surprised Wanda cannot hear it. "You're so hot." Wanda breaks the silence, the weight of her head leaving my shoulder. "I'm- what?" I shake my head confused. "Hot? Miss Maximo, you're into some messy looking-" "You're warm." Wanda calmly interrupts me, her arms around me slowly spinning me around to face her. I close my eyes, leaning against the cool window behind me. It does indeed feel a little too nice and cool against the slightly sticky shirt. The mug in my hands presses up against my stomach as Wanda presses against it, her hands leaving my waist and I open my eyes. I bat my eyes a couple of times, trying to get them to focus on Wanda who is standing practically on the same spot of the floor as I am. her face is slightly orange in the light from outside, and she looks She places her hands on either side of my face, testing my skin. Her brows furrow slightly and her eyes look into mine and I swear I can see all of the lights from the city reflected in their vastness. "You're burning." She whispers. I can't answer her, I have suddenly lost the ability to speak and no words manage to make the travel from my brain to my lips. Wanda's eyes travel to my lips as if she's also waiting for a sound to escape them. All I do is clutch the mug in my hands tightly. As I say nothing, Wanda looks back up into my eyes and she smiles slightly. "You're quiet." She comments. No wonder, you're so close. Holy shit. She bites her lip in thought and I again wish I could read her mind. My eyes are glued to where she's gnawing on her lip. She's so close. If she would just stop biting on that stupid lip-One of Wanda's hands slides down my face and comes to rest against the spot on my chest where my heart is trying to break free from. Wanda looks down with a slight smile. "Is this a symptom, or..." She wonders and looks up at me with a twinkle in her eye. "I think you know." I regain the power of speech suddenly. Wanda smiles at that, a small one-sided smile and she wets her lips, finally letting her bottom lip go from between her teeth. "Should calm that down." She so ly purrs and it does nothing to calm I watch her lean forward towards me, her hand pressing against my chest, the warm mug squished between us. The city blinks and twinkles in her eyes and then it's gone as she closes her eyes, her nose touching mine. "Okay?" She whispers, her breath warm against my face. I'm anything but okay, I want to yell. I can't though, I can't breathe and I can't think and I can't move. I let out what I hope is a sound that says yes, but I can't be sure. My entire body wants to either melt into goo or explode like a firework and it can't make up its mind. "Stop thinking." She whispers again, her lips practically grazing mine as she speaks. For once, I do as I'm told, and I stop thinking. I tilt my head slightly forwards and that's enough. Her hand on my cheek tenses up slightly as my lips meet hers. They're so so and she's so gentle. For once, everything goes still and quiet and there is nothing anymore but her. It feels like I no longer exist and all I feel is her. Her hand pressing against my chest, keeping my heart in check, her body pressing against mine, keeping me trapped against the cool window, and her lips against mine, keeping me from floating away. She lets out the so est, most quiet little hum which vibrates against my lips and I feel her smile. I get this urge to pull her even closer to me, like I don't have enough of her so my hands travel from between us to-"Fuck!" She suddenly gasps and pulls away from me and a second later the mug I was holding crashes down on the floor and explodes into countless sharp shards. I feel like the entire world shi s and I sink slightly down against the glass, her absence so strong I fight to keep upright. Wanda's face is scrunched up in pain and I notice, horrified, that I've just spilled the rest of my tea all over her front. Oh. My. God. "Holy shit." I blurt out. "I am so sorry." Wanda doesn't reply but tries to pat down her shirt as if she can get rid of the hot water with her bare hands. I feel mortified, feeling a thousand times more ill all of a sudden and I press myself o the window and hurry past Wanda, careful not to step onto any shards. I quickly find a kitchen towel, which I place under cold water, before I turn back towards Wanda, feeling like the biggest idiot in the world. She turns to look at me, her face flushed, from kissing or from being doused with boiling water I cannot be sure. I stupidly hold out the dripping towel towards her. I hate myself. Wanda walks up to me slowly, her eyes glossy and she takes the towel from me and li s her black shirt, revealing an angry red blotch on her otherwise pale stomach. "I'm so-" I begin at the sight of her. "Don't apologize." Wanda interrupts me and I look up, trying to gauge whether she's mad or not. "You're an idiot, you know that?" She says, failing to keep a straight face and I laugh awkwardly. "I can't believe I did that." I sigh and bury my face in my hands. "Well, you weren't thinking, were you." I hear some mirth in her voice, but I still feel horrible. "I'm so-" "Livvy, I'm fine." Wanda interrupts me again, my hand suddenly invaded by hers. She squeezes my hand to make me look up. "I think it's time for bed, don't you?" "Yeah, I just gotta clean-" "Don't worry." Wanda places the kitchen towel down on the counter behind me and then twitches her hand towards the broken mug, which with a tendril of scarlet flies towards us, completely fixed. "I can't believe I burned you. Are you okay?" I can't help myself but ask her as she places the mug down next to the kitchen towel. She looks up at me, her cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling and she "I'll get burned by you honey anytime." "Nice to see you two finally decided to join us." Stark looks up from his phone with a sour expression as Wanda and I finally enter the common area. Wanda tenses up slightly at his words, but she doesn't say anything, instead focusing on helping me to one of the plush couches in the room. When I awoke this morning, I quickly realized that whatever is wrong with me hasn't subsided; in fact, I actually woke up feeling slightly worse again. I am getting concerned, and I think Wanda has caught onto my feelings despite me not wanting to voice them, not wanting to worry her. I've always hated being ill. In any case, we spent the morning in our room, me trying to gather enough strength to get out of bed, Wanda resorting to staying in bed next to me as emotional support. We haven't mentioned our little nightly tea break. "Did you sleep well?" Steve asks us, looking slightly worried as he regards me sinking onto the couch with a sigh. "Yes, thank you." I give him a slight smile, my vision going from sharp to blurry to sharp again. "Still not feeling great?" He continues, turning slightly to face me more directly, placing the mug in his hand down onto the kitchen table he is leaning against. "I'm decent." I lie. Wanda sits down onto the armrest of the couch next to me, and with is orange juice fly into her hands. "Hey! What did I tell you about magic indoors!?!" Stark exclaims but is ignored by Wanda. "Here, maybe this will make you feel better." She hands me the glass, which I accept, bringing some of the cold liquid up to my lips. "Hmm. Pulp. Good choice." I swallow gratefully, the juice cooling down my throat which has been feeling irritated ever since I woke up around two in the morning to a coughing fit. "Am I invisible to everyone?" Stark complains, looking around the room for some support. "Now that might make me feel better." I smirk at him and he glares back at me as Wanda chuckles into her juice. "What a comedian." He looks down at his phone, sighs, and places it down on the table before looking up and fixing Wanda with his gaze. "So, bestie,we thought we'd bring you down to the training facilities and check out what you can do." "Who's we?" Wanda asks, her voice low, making me almost shiver. She's clearly not a fan of being experimented on again. Shocker. "Me." A new voice speaks up, and Natasha appears from the shadows on the other side of the huge room. I wonder briefly if she's been there the entire time, and I don't really doubt she hasn't just been silently observing us the entire time. "Should've guessed." Wanda shi s slightly, propping one leg clad in sweatpants under herself as she watches Natasha glide towards where Steve is still standing against the table. "And why should I agree?" "Because you're under my roof and-" Stark begins, but is cut o by Natasha who hasn't taken her eyes o Wanda. "I say so." Natasha says, her voice calm and matching Wanda's in quietness. I look from Natasha to Wanda, who slightly tilts her head to the side as she watches the person who will become one of her closest friends, but at the moment that feels like very far in the future for them. I briefly wonder if this is what it was like for Wanda when she moved in with the Avengers a er Sokovia. Wanda's eyes quickly meet mine for a second before she looks back at Natasha. I can't lie, I'm finding their quiet spar of wills rather intimidating and I am very happy to simply watch from the sidelines. "I don't feel like it." Wanda stubbornly tells Natasha, who snorts sarcastically, looking at Wanda like she's just told her an unbelievable joke. "Well, I do. So, a er breakfast, we're heading down." Wanda glares at Natasha, and Steve sighs whilst Stark keeps looking from one to the other, looking like he's watching a tennis match. I take another swig of the orange juice, just to do something to escape the tension, and also to soothe my itching throat. I can see Wanda look down at me from the corner of my eyes. "I'm not leaving her." She speaks and I feel myself blush, so I try to cover it up by pretending I have to drink more juice. Smooth "She can come." Natasha answers her calmly. "I'm just interested in "Thanks." I thank her sarcastically. "For now." Natasha adds, locking me in place with her steely gaze. I hu as Wanda protectively places a hand on my back. I don't miss Natasha slightly narrowing her eyes at the gesture, and my heart skips a beat again. At this rate I'm going to su er from a heart attack any minute, my body confusing me with how it's reacting to touch lately. I ignore the little voice in my head that reminds me that it is just one person's touch in particular that evokes these reactions from me. "How fabulous, we're all agreed, then!" Stark speaks out loudly, cutting through the heavy tension. "Eat, drink, whatever you need, then I want you all downstairs. I'll go get stu ready." And with that, he stands up from his seat by the table, grabs his phone, and struts out, leaving the room rather quiet in his absence. The four of us stay in awkward silence for a while, Natasha glaring at Wanda and me, Wanda keeping her hand on my back whilst no doubt staring back stubbornly at Natasha. I keep my eyes on the contents of the glass in my hand, wishing it contained something stronger. "I guess we better go, too." Steve finally says, standing up to his full height, looking to his le where Natasha is standing. She glares up at him, but her expression so ens slightly and she seems to deflate just a little. "Alright." She agrees. "Come down when you're ready. Last floor Wanda and I watch the pair leave, talking to each other in hushed voices, speaking words I cannot quite make out. When the elevator doors have closed behind them, Wanda lets out a heavy sigh, her hand making a comforting rubbing motion on my back before she removes it to tuck a loose strand of hair behind my ear. I try to ignore the intimate gesture, brushing it o as casual. "Are you okay?" She asks me, her voice laced with concern. "You've been significantly less sarcastic than usual." "You miss my sarcasm?" I look up at her sweetly, batting my lashes at her and she rolls her eyes. "Didn't say that." She says, pursing her lips together in an attempt not to smile. "Don't evade my question." "I'm not." I say, dropping my head back onto the cushions behind me,

staring up at the ceiling. When I don't say anything else, Wanda's face swims into view as she leans in over me. Some of her hair escapes the messy bun she's trapped it in and falls down to tickle my face. "Hello?" She quizzes me. "Hello." I smile back at her upside-down face. "How are you feeling?" The want to not lie to her competes with the urge to keep her from worrying, making me hesitate just long enough for her to furrow her brows in that telltale sign of hers that tells me she's indeed worrying. That's one thing about Wanda I know with confidence; she worries too much. "Livvy, please." Her voice is so, and her green eyes pleading. "Well, I feel like I'm drunk. Without the fun part." I give in. "I'm worried." She admits, and my heart thumps slightly louder at hearing that her worry is directed towards me. "I'll be fine." I try to convince her, but her eyebrows don't smoothen out, telling me she didn't buy it. "Seriously, Wands, I'll be fine. "Wands?" She repeats, looking slightly amused. "I'm ill, leave me alone." I li my hand towards her face and press my thumb on the spot between her furrowed brows, repeating a gesture I learned from my grandmother. "Relax, scowling will give you wrinkles." I warn her just as my grandmother would warn me. Wanda's face relaxes, and she smiles warmly down at me. I remove my thumb from her forehead and turn my head slightly to the side to see her better as I'm imagining my untrustworthy eyesight is making it look like she's close to tears. I blink a couple of times, but she still looks like she's holding back tears whilst smiling down at me. I frown, slightly confused. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to -are you alright?" I ask her, surprised at her reaction. "No, no, I'm fine." She blinks away the unshed tears. "It's just... that's something Pietro would say. He would always complain about my I bite my cheek, anxious at her mentioning Pietro and looking so sad, but still also feeling that swell of pride in my chest at her comparing me to someone she loved. "Relax." She whispers and presses her thumb in between my eyebrows, and I relax my face, having subconsciously been frowning. "It was a compliment." "Thank you." I smile back at her, knowing that she truly did mean it as a compliment, and the fact making me feel slightly proud of myself. Wanda smiles back, her hand slowly circling down from pressing against my forehead and coming to rest on my cheek. We keep eye contact and it feels like time either stops or slows down as I fall into the depths of green staring back at me. Wanda's thumb caresses my cheek so ly, and she smiles slightly and before I know it her hand is gone and she breaks eye contact. "We should probably..." She says awkwardly, scrunching up her face. "Oh, yeah." I have completely forgotten about the Avengers wanting to see Wanda's powers. "I don't want to keep them waiting, Nat already doesn't like me very much..." Wanda explains herself to me while getting o the couch. "You know, she's just being cautious." I try to justify Natasha's cold behavior, and begin to push myself o the couch too, which proves di icult as it feels like I have no strength in my muscles. Wanda takes pity on me and tenderly grabs my arm and helps me get to standing, where I wobble slightly, my head pounding from the rush "Thank you." I thank her breathlessly and notice that little frown of worry return on her face. "You're welcome." She begins to lead me towards the elevators in which Steve and Natasha disappeared into a while ago. We travel down all the way to the basement in comfortable silence. I notice Wanda doesn't let go of my arm the entire way. I'm both grateful for the physical support; feeling like I could topple over any second, and for the chance to be close to her. Seems like any opportunity I get nowadays to be near her I take. The elevator comes to a slow and so stop, the doors open and we step out into what looks like a huge gym with no windows. Natasha, Steve, and Stark are all there, congressed in a huddle, deep in discussion. Steve is the first to notice our presence. He looks up, blue eyes shining, and gives us a polite smile. "Hey, guys." He greets us and Natasha and Stark look up. "Olivia, why don't you just sit down here." He quickly walks towards where a solitary chair is standing and grabs the back of it, waiting there for me ever so politely. Wanda leads me towards it and although I loathe being seen as weak, I gratefully let myself ease down onto the chair, instantly feeling relieved to be o my feet. Wanda lets go of me but doesn't move from my side. "I'm here." She announces in vain. "Good." Natasha steps forward, and I notice she's in what looks like workout gear. All black, of course. Very on-brand. "You're going to fight me." "Nat, come on." Wanda looks at her friend, who looks back unflinching. "I'm not going to fight you." "Yes, you are." Natasha's face breaks into a smile for the first time. While her stoic face is unnerving, the smile she sports now is perhaps even more unnerving. "Nat-" Wanda begins, shaking her head. "Did no one ever tell you it is useless trying to argue with her?" Stark asks Wanda, sounding bored. "Just get going already, you'll get it over with quicker." Wanda glares at Stark, gives Natasha one last pleading look before she hu s in annoyance, and walks forward towards Natasha, who so ens her knees into a stance from which she can easily either attack or retreat. Stark quickly backs away from the two and comes to stand next to Steve and me. "You do know this is useless?" I ask them, but they just shrug, not looking away from Natasha and Wanda. "Great. This should be fun." Both Wanda and Natasha stand still for a few moments, Natasha no doubt analyzing Wanda and coming up with the best plan of attack. Exactly the same as she did with me when I came back in time last time. Then she moves, so swi ly and quickly I would have missed it had I blinked. Natasha's right foot suddenly connects with Wanda's abdomen which causes Wanda to stumble backward, and before Wanda even has the time to recuperate from the blow, Natasha's on her again, with another swi kick causing Wanda to fall down on her knees with a grunt of pain. "Hm." Natasha looks up at the rest of us with a smile. "Well, Tony, I wouldn't be too concer-" She stops mid-sentence as a blast of red suddenly lights her up from behind and she goes flying to the side, landing about twenty meters away with a loud thump. Wanda straightens up behind her, looking at once angry and smug. "Damn." Stark whispers under his breath, voicing my thoughts Natasha doesn't waste any time but gets up smoothly, and breathes out slowly, giving herself a few seconds, and then she's running towards Wanda. Wanda is taken aback by the fist suddenly flying towards her face, but she manages to block it with a flash of scarlet. And the next one. And a leg. And another fist. "Jarvis, you seeing this?" Stark mutters. "Analyse." Natasha gives Wanda a run for her money, but she doesn't manage to make contact again. I watch intrigued, not ever having had the opportunity to really observe Wanda using her magic in a fight. She flicks and turns her hands and fingers in front of her, quickly and smoothly, in perfect control of her scarlet this time around. It's beautiful to watch. They continue for another few minutes until Natasha has tired herself out and she swears, taking a step back, her brow glistening with sweat, chest heaving. Wanda makes a point of looking bored, and she makes eye contact with me and winks at me, causing me to burst out into a wide smile.

"Do you mind if I have a go?" Steve walks towards Wanda and Natasha. "She's-I can't-" Natasha pants. "This is useless." Wanda repeats my words from earlier, looking positively lively, though, her eyes gleaming. "You're good to go?" Steve asks her politely, and she rolls her eyes, but nods. Natasha steps back with clumsy feet, and Steve gets into position. Wanda li s her hands in front of her and waits for him to make a move. Steve decides to go for a kick towards Wanda's le side, but his foot gets caught in midair by a ball of scarlet, and Wanda flicks her wrist lazily and Steve's foot drags him forcefully to the side where he tumbles and falls but manages to come out of the fall with a roll. He looks slightly surprised but decidedly tries again. Wanda decides to this time yank both of his feet from underneath him, suspending him upside down. "Enough?" Wanda asks Steve, who makes a sound that sounds like he's relenting, and Wanda carefully lets him down. Natasha suddenly sprints forward, silent as ever, coming up on Wanda from behind. I go to open my mouth to warn her, but there is no need as Wanda swivels around, ducking beneath Natasha's high kick, her hair coming slightly loose from the bun. Natasha goes to attack again, but Wanda seems to know exactly what she's thinking, and a flash of scarlet pushes Natasha away by slamming into her stomach. "Alright, enough, Nat." Steve straightens up as Natasha looks like she wants to murder Wanda. "How-?" She pants, looking at Wanda. "You taught me." Wanda tells her, her voice cracking slightly. Natasha looks taken aback, honestly looking surprised for the first time. She struggles for a second with something, before she relents and gives Wanda an approving nod. "Well done." Wanda beams, and struts over towards me with red cheeks, legitimately glowing from Natasha's praise, reminding me a little of a puppy having finally mastered a trick. It's rather adorable. "Well done." I mouth at her with a raised eyebrow and she grins. "Want to have a go, Tony?" Steve asks Stark with a smile. "Oh, I've seen you guys get your asses kicked, that's enough for me." "I recall seeing you get your ass kicked too..." I pipe up, referring to when he went flying into the lamppost. "Oh, what do you know, you're probably hallucinating at this point." $\stackrel{ ag}{=}$ A/N: 44 chapters later, it finally happened. THE kiss. I decided to take pity on you and delay the heartbreak a little while longer...:)

a

å

a

Continue reading next part □