Chapter 56

We ascend even further up into the clouds, visible through a window on the le before theelevator finally comes to a stop. Romano and I awkwardly shu le out of the confined space and breathe again, both of us no doubt glad to have escaped the forced proximity. a I pause, looking around, hearing the elevator doors shut behind me. We've stepped out into one of the most expensive-looking rooms I have ever seen (although that doesn't mean that much as I can only remember a handful of rooms). The space is sparsely decorated with expensive-looking furniture, and at one end of the room, there is an open second-floor landing. The walls are almost exclusively floor-toceiling windows, giving the impression of the room floating peacefully hundreds of meters above the bustling, noisy city below. It's exactly what I would imagine Tony Stark's flat to look like, and nothing less. Romano shoots me a look, no doubt looking for any signs of recognition within me, but in my mind, I've just stepped into the space for the very first time. I try to see if there is anything that would trigger any sort of emotional reaction, but I just feel all quiet inside. Nothing. I feel a hand rest on my right shoulder blade and so ly but steadily guide me onward, further into the apartment. I comply, limply following Romano 's guidance past a kitchen and through a few hallways until we reach a door at the end of a hallway with only a few doors on its sides. Romano stops me and shoots me another expectant glance. I stay patient and still, not knowing what she expects me to do. She breathes out so ly and opens the door to the room, all the whilst looking at me curiously. I step in, looking around cautiously, somehow feeling slightly on edge. The room is empty of people, thankfully. It looks like any spare bedroom would I assume if you're a multi-billionaire. There is a large bed with so pillows, an armchair, and a huge closet, a half-open door leading to I assume an ensuite. This room, again, has huge windows which make me feel insignificant and small as I look out onto the other skyscrapers fighting against gravity. Romano steps in next to me and I look at her. "Nice." I comment, feeling like I should say something, the silence a little too thick for my liking. "It's an improvement to being in a cell, that's for sure." She agrees, her lips turning upwards in a slight smirking smile as if the thought of me in locked up gives her great amusement. I nod, ignoring her smirk, and go to sit down on the side of the bed, feeling kind of exhausted. My head is pounding, trying to keep up with all the new impressions I'm sure, and simply seeing the bed makes me aware of how much I wish I could just take a little nap and then figure everything out once I wake up. "You know." Romano begins, extending her hands out in front of her as she walks up to stand right in front of my knees. I hold out my handcu ed hands out to her. "I am aware of what you've been through. I know what Hydra -let me finish!" She shoots me a look and I close my mouth, having wanted to interrupt her and defend Hydra, who were only acting in my best interest. Romano purses her lips. "I know what Hydra has made you believe -and forget. There is no way for me to convince you they're in the wrong because I won't descend to their torture methods to bring your memories back. Again, let me finish! Geez!" a She lets my hands go, which are now free of handcu s. I promptly place my hands in my lap, massaging my wrists gently. Romano returns the black handcu s to their original place by her hip and takes a step back, observing me. "I know Wanda believes that she can make you remember. I'm not too sure, I mean Steve has tried with Bucky. Steve almost died trying with Bucky. And now Wanda almost died trying with you." Romano pauses, looking me over with a stern look. "You know a er you stabbed her I was the one that had to hold her hand and keep her awake until we got back here? She couldn't wrap her pretty little head around the fact that you did that to her. She was just worried about you." I listen without reacting. I suppose what Romano is trying to make me feel guilty, but I don't feel anything. Getting me to feel any emotion lately seems to be a mammoth task. Romano sighs. "Just give it a go, will you? I don't know what she sees in you to make her so stupidly stubborn about you, but I have seen you two together. Maybe it is something worth fighting for." She pauses, and I don't know what to say. I don't even know if she wants me to say anything. I feel torn. On one hand, everything she's saying reads like the truth to me, but I just cannot recall anything of the sort. And every time Maximo is mentioned, there seems to be this pit of fear that opens up inside of me. Fear and anger. Maybe the chair has planted that in me, but how am I supposed to make it all just go away? "Anyway." Romano sighs. "I know it won't mean anything to you, but don't you dare go break her heart. I feel like she's too fragile to be able to take another hurt, so, just, don't. Or I'll hurt you." Her last words make her grin at herself, apparently finding the thought amusing. đ "I'm not interested in breaking anyone's heart, all I want is to re-" "Vernut. Return. Return her to Hydra, yes yes, I'm aware. And that, my dear, is never going to happen, not while I'm around." Romano smiles sweetly, looking down at me from where she's standing. "So you best sit tight on that little butt of yours and hope Wanda figures out a way to get through that thick skull of yours, or I'm going to have to try. And I'll promise you that won't be very pleasant. For either of us." Romano smiles her one-sided smile again and I glare at her, not finding her nearly as amusing as she's clearly finding herself. Or just the thought of hurting me. On second thought, it's probably just that. "Don't you think their name for you is just a little too on the nose, huh? Vernut. Return. Don't you think you've been specifically designed for this one task?" I open my mouth to argue with her, but there are no arguments readily available and I'm forced to shut my mouth again, feeling slightly idiotic. I hate to admit it, but the spy might be onto something. a "You know, you were a whole person before this. You were annoying as hell and for the love of god you did not know how to lock a door! But you cared. You cared for her. I could tell. Now you're just a machine meant for this one purpose. Hurting the person who cares for you. I know what that feels like." She tells me, her eyes finally betraying some hurt, a sight I never thought I would see. The Black Widow pitying herself. "Again, no, you do not." I shut her down and she blinks a couple of times, regaining composure. "No, maybe I don't, because I refused to blindly comply -like you are right now." "Now that's not strictly true, is it Romano? I do recall that for quite a lot of years you didn't refuse." I remind her and her expression darkens dangerously at my words. "But the fact is I did change." She says and breathes out heavily. "I hope you can, too." Apparently happy with that, she turns without another word and walks towards the door confidently. I watch her in slight jealousy, wishing I were that certain of myself. As if knowing I'm watching her, she turns around just as she's on the threshold. "Oh, I'm locking the door. Don't try anything, Jarvis is keeping an eye on you." "What could I possibly try?" I sigh, mostly to myself. "I don't want to know." The door closes on me and I'm on my own again. I hop up, going to check the door. It is indeed locked from the outside. I turn around, aimlessly looking around the room. I can tell there's something slightly o with the room, and it takes me a minute to realize it has been rid of anything that could pose as a weapon. It's with slight satisfaction I realize that means they are, at least on some level, scared of me. Or maybe scared forme. I wander around the room a couple of times, but no bright idea comes to me. I don't know how to solve this. I don't know how to escape; I don't know how to get to Bu- the Winter Soldier, and I don't know how to get back to Maximo. I sit back down on the bed, tired all over again, Romano 's words ringing in my ears. To return. That is what they named me. It is my name and it doesn't even have anything to do with me. I know it is referring to bringing Maximo back. The thought tires me out even more. Is that my identity? Romano managed to shake hers, or rather reinvent hers. My thoughts trail back to the Winter Soldier. What about him? He hasn't reinvented his identity. Does he want to? Is he tryingto? a In the silence that presses against me from all directions a thousand more thoughts pipe up, all fighting for my attention and I lie down on the bed, overwhelmed. I breathe shakily, wondering what the hell I'm supposed to do now. I know I should return to Hydra, or at least find Bu-damn it the Winter Soldier, but I can't do either. I feel my vision blur slightly as stupid tears begin welling up in my eyes as I'm nearing the edge of an anxiety attack again. I wish I could talk to the well-dressed woman with her hair always in a bun from Hydra. She would assure me. I even miss the chair in a sick way. It would help me forget and I wouldn't be this confused. I struggle for breath as my chest constricts further. Breathe. a If I could just get that door open I could probably escape. I would give anything to be back in my white cell in Hydra, just sitting there so empty. But was that peace only found because of everything that was lost to me because of Hydra? How will I ever know what the truth is if I can't remember anything? I gulp for air. Breathe. My body is warm all over and this time it doesn't take me long to realize what just happened. "You again." I croak out between my ragged breaths. Yes, me againHer voice retorts sounding slightly on edge. I can't comprehend the weird feeling of hearing someone else in your mind as your mind is on the verge of throwing itself o a cli . Livvy, you need to breathe. "Get - out!" Not until I know you're fine. "I'm fine, kindly fuck o ." I groan, squeezing my eyes shut as if that would keep her out. You fuck o . She comes back lamely, making me actually chuckle. "Mature." I speak out into the silence. Well, it's got you breathing, hasn't ?tShe points out, correctly. "Nothing to do with you." Hmm, you tell yourself that She sounds pleased with herself now and I sigh. "Right. Did you want anything?" Silence. Then; What are you wearing? a "Excuse me?" I burst out, my eyes opening wide and I hear her giggle merrily, a joyous feeling suddenly overcoming me. What?She innocently coos. "Again, what do you want?" What, are you busy? "Yes, actually. I am planning my great escape." I say sarcastically and she chuckles in my head. How's that going, Houdini?

"Good until you interrupted me." Then I'm perfectly on time. I told you -I'm not letting you go. "Yes, you told me." I roll my eyes, feeling slightly silly speaking out loud to no one. You know you can just think your thoughts and I'll hear yo&he answers, having, obviously, just heard my thought. "I don't want you in my head, witch." Too bad. I'm not asking She says simply.

"Fantastic. If you're moving in, will you pay rent?"

belong to me.

"Stop."

wash over me.

I'm not a child.

wantto hear more.

open up!

Wands:)

say sitting up on the bed.

Okay, so, what are you wearing?

Are you asking me to move in? Isn't it a little soon?

She sends another wave of giddiness over me, completely contrasting

my emotions, my body feeling confused at the feeling that doesn't

"Alright, I'm sorry, I don't want to sit here joking around with you." I

She stays silent for a little while, for long enough that I start believing

that she's actually le me. I try searching myself for any sign of her,

surprised to note. She did get me out of that panicked state of mind,

but can't find any. The thought makes me feel slightly sad, I'm

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and I'm starting to suspect that the reason my cell door opened earlier was her distracting me from the anxiety attack I had then. Yes, you're welcome. Right, you're not gone. I think loudly in my head. Not so loud. And no, I'm not. Not letting you go. I don't understand why, though. What do you get out of this? honestly wonder. It's not about me. I - I feel responsible for you he sounds small and

tired and I feel her wave of confusion and sadness and slight guilt

I know!She snaps. It's just... I begged you to bring me back in time

you. Over and over again and now this has happened to you.

I pause for a little while. There's a truth I feel but I'm not sure why I

feel it, but I know I have to let her know, I can't bear to feel what she's

because I wanted to save everyone I loved... and I just ended up using

feeling as she's telling me all of that. I don't blame you. Another wave of her emotions come over me and it's almost too much, almost enough to send me over again. You can't blame me because you don't remembe\he sounds like she's close to tears. And now you don't remember just when I've figured it out, Livvy. I should have been open, I should've done more I stay silent, letting her go on. I can't even bring myself to stop her. I

I should have learned a lesson from before. I don't get happiness with

anyone, or they end up... hurt\$he sighs heavily and I suddenly feel

like I'm being sucked into a massive black hole with no escape.

I hear you, but I - I don't know what to tell you. I don't, I can't

Maximo - I begin, but don't know where I'm going.

Livvy, everything just keeps pulling us apart.

remember. How can I be this person you clearly need me to be? A slight warmth fills me and I feel sure of myself. I catch myself smiling, and I then realize I'm again feeling what she's feeling. This is utterly confusing. You just be you. I'll be here to pull you out of the darkness and show you who I know you are. ã

A/N: I know I'm a day late, I'm so sorry! Wanted to update earlier but

I hope it was worth the wait though! Nat is so great to write, I can't

even, it brings me so much joy haha! And a little cutesy talk with the

Continue reading next part □

Next one will be up hopefully Friday, if not then de o by Sunday!

heard my friend watching Wind River and got slightly distracted... FBI,

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