



## xxii. Broken Power

Two weeks later, Sam found Auralie huddled by herself in the training room, sitting on the bench in the corner.

"Ali," he called tentatively, hoping his good friend was ok, "what's going on? I thought you and Wanda were going out to look at apartments together." The witch and the former shield agent were trying to find a place nearby to call their own. They were supposed to be going out in an hour.

"Sam, I, I've been keeping a secret from the team. But you're our new leader. You should know," Auralie muttered, her voice breaking. Sam came to sit beside her and put a hand on her shoulder.

"What's going on Ali? Whatever it is, I'm sure it can't be that bad," Sam said, "have you told Wanda?"

"Yeah of course. I don't keep secrets from her," Auralie snidely, "but Sam..... when I used my power to hijack the gauntlet..... I pushed myself to the limit. I didn't know my own name. It did something to me. My powers..... they haven't been working since. I haven't been able to summon any light."

"What," Sam was both surprised and worried, "how can that happen?"

"I don't know, my powers just broke," Auralie sobbed.

Sam said gently, "well why didn't you tell us? We can help you figure it out."

"I was afraid," Auralie admitted, "this team is my family, and I didn't want you to worry for me. I also didn't want you to think I couldn't handle any missions, just because my powers aren't working. Sam, I'm capable. Nat trained me well. I can handle this, so I didn't think it would matter."

"Ali, we know you're capable. I've seen you do some crazy things. Maybe not Steve level crazy, but crazy none the less. But we need to know these things so we know who can do what. And we'll always worry about you. It's what friends do," Sam smiled at his friend.

Auralie took his hand and squeezed it to calm herself down, "thanks, Sam. Do you think my powers are gone for good?"

"I'm not sure Ali, I've never seen anything like what you can do. You're one of a kind, and that's great, but kinda hard to research," Sam replied.

Auralie nodded, still quiet. She didn't need powers, power was hardly anything when compared to friendship and love. But her light had been a part of her for so long, now that it was gone it felt like..... like.....

"I'll bet your missing power feels like you're missing an arm like me," Bucky said. Apparently, he had overheard the conversation and decided to come to comfort Auralie.

Auralie responded, "yeah, like that. Hey Buck, what's up?"

"I just came to tell you guys we were out of milk, and it's Sam's turn to go grocery shopping," Bucky said, "but this seems more important."

Sam groaned, "I thought it was your turn to go to the store."

"No, I went last week when we needed cereal," Bucky pointed out. Auralie nodded. The former Winter Soldier was not wrong, to Sam's dismay.

"Anything else you all want?" Sam asked, "since I'm going anyway."

"Ice cream," Auralie said, a small smile creeping on to her face.

Bucky beamed, "Plums please!"

"You always want plums," Sam griped, "and Ali, you always want ice cream."

"IT'S GOOD," Bucky and Auralie said in unison. Sam groaned. The three of them had formed quite the trio. Sam and Auralie were the ones leading the Avengers for the most part, and that meant they were also in charge of helping Bucky get back to being himself. Shuri's skills had worked wonders, but Bucky still had a lot to deal with.

Of course, being Sam and Auralie, they usually just ended up joking with Bucky. That was alright with all three of them. Sam and Bucky were coming to enjoy each other's company (especially exchanging stupid stories about all the dramatic stuff Steve had done) and Auralie liked having two crazy brother figures.

"Fine, I'll get you ice cream. And Buck, you get plums, but you have to come with me so I'm not bored to death," Sam said.

Bucky sighed, "fine. I'll come. Ali, you wanna join us?"

Auralie grinned, "as exciting as the grocery store is, I have to pass. Wanda and I have an apartment to look at."

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Though Bucky and Sam had reassured Auralie about her powers, her good cheer had faded later that afternoon. The apartment Wanda and Auralie had gone to see was actually rather nice and seemed to fit in their budget. They both were very excited at the prospect of moving in together, just the two of them, but Wanda was noticing that her girlfriend was a little down.

"Darling what's wrong," Wanda said, "I thought you liked the apartment?"

"I do, I like it a lot. And I can't wait to get moved in with you. It has nothing to do with the apartment. I told Sam and Bucky about what was happening to my powers," Auralie replied.

Wanda cocked her head, "and they agree that you can still handle missions, right?"

"Yeah," Auralie answered, "but I'm just so confused. Why is this happening Wanda? I didn't know this was even possible. I don't know much about my powers, but this seems weird, even for someone with my origin story."

Wanda looked down. She hadn't wanted to tell Auralie, she hadn't wanted to scare the other girl. She had thought it wouldn't matter. But, as it turned out, something had happened, and it was important. Wanda couldn't hide the truth any longer. She looked back up and met Auralie's eyes. She said, "I didn't want to tell you..... I wanted to protect you. But something had happened, when I found you..... a hero you brought me and everyone else back."

"What happened? I know something happened when I pushed myself to the limit, but what?" Auralie cried desperately, "I understand you want me to be safe and happy, but please Wanda, I need to know."

"When I found you," tears were brewing in Wanda's eyes, "your heart had stopped. You weren't breathing. You were dead, Auralie, dead for a single second. And I could feel it. It felt like my heart was breaking. It felt like Pietro all over again. I couldn't watch it happen. So, I don't know what I did, but I did something. With my magic. You glowed scarlet, and then you were breathing again. But something must have happened to your powers when all that....."

Wanda dissolved into tears. She had been replaying it, over and over again, hiding that moment and all the emotion she had felt with it. She had thought it hadn't mattered, that everything would be fine. She had saved Auralie, and they were together. But she couldn't get over the fear she had felt when she realized she could be losing the woman she loved.

"Wanda, don't cry," Auralie moved to embrace her girlfriend, "it's ok. Shhhhhh I'm here. Whatever's going on with me, we can figure it out. I'm just glad you saved me."

"Don't leave me," Wanda whispered.

Auralie replied, "I'm not going anywhere. Ever."

**A/N: Bucky, Sam, and Auralie are best friends, and I love it. But if you thought everything was fine and it would be all flu from here on out, think again:**

**I guess I broke my promise. I said Ali would live, but she died right then for a second. But I don't kill characters twice, so she'll definitely survive the book. That is a promise that I will keep.**

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