



xxiv. Searching For Truth

A year later, things were very different.

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For one, Auralie and Wanda had bought an apartment together and had been happily living there together ever since. For another thing, Auralie had relative control over her shadow powers. Her light had not come back, and Auralie missed it, but she liked the new powers too.

The New Avengers had also become more professional. Sam, Wanda, Bucky, Auralie, and Rhodes had become a team, a family, just as much as the old Avengers were. They had spent the last year tracking down criminals, especially former members of Hydra. Thanks to Shield, especially Maria Hill, the Sokovia Accords had been repealed. Shield had been forced to pay a fee for some of the damage caused, and the Avengers still had to send reports to the government, and answer to UN rules. But the UN could not force them to go anywhere they didn't want to or lock them up just for having powers.

Auralie was walking down the street one day, passing by a dark alleyway. Not one to be the idiot from horror movies, Auralie kept a wide berth and tried to keep away from the dark scary place.

However, though she tried to avoid trouble, trouble seemed to go out of its way to bug her.

Someone grabbed her from behind and pulled her into the alleyway. Auralie kicked at him and heard a grunt. She tried to dig her elbows into his stomach and fall forward to make him lose his balance. As they fought, he slammed into the side of a building and let out a string of curse words.

He released her, and she whirled around, shadows trailing from her hands. Letting out a gasp of surprise, she recognized him, even though he was bruised and battered.

"Lucian," she said, shock overwhelming her fighting instinct.

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"Sis, Ali, Ali, please. Don't hurt me," He held his hands up in surrender.

"Then why are you attacking me?" Auralie asked, her voice raising.

"I..... I need your help. Elory's looking for me. We need to stop her..... I can't..... I can't do this without you, sis. Please..... this is about us.... this is important...."

"I thought Elory was your boss."

"She was..... and for a long time we were hiding out in another dimension. But she's going to kill people. She's going to hurt them..... she doesn't care. She's using me for my power, she told me so. I can't do it, Ali, I can't be the puppet she wants. But she won't stop hunting me. We have to destroy her..... please, I need help."

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Auralie sighed, "Lucian, trust me on this, I would love nothing more to believe you. To be able to trust you. But I can't. You betrayed me. How am I supposed to work with you after that?"

"Sis, she lied. She's not going to make the world better, she's going to burn it down. You save the world, you can't let that happen," Lucian pleaded, "and I know I was wrong. I learned from my mistakes. Please, if you can't trust me, do it for the world."

Auralie hesitated.

Lucian continued, "besides, this could give us answers. About our origins, our powers, everything. We could get the truth, and I know you want the truth."

She did. She really did want the truth. And she had an obligation to protect the world from threats like Elory. But what if Lucian was leading her into a trap?

"Luca," she said so ly, using his old childhood nickname, "I wish I could trust you, but I can't."

"Ali," he begged.

Auralie took a deep breath, "but I have a world to protect, and that means following this lead. But I'm not going anywhere alone with you. I'm not stupid. So come on, we have someone to see."

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"Who?" Lucian demanded.

Auralie replied, "my sister."

"We don't have a sister," Lucian said, confused.

Auralie responded, "she's not your sister, she's my sister. She adopted me and saved me and brought me to Shield. Her name is Maria Hill. Be careful, she takes no shit."

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"So the three of us have to stop an evil bitch from another dimension, who has magic and makes use of portals, from burning the world down?" Maria asked for clarification.

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"I know it sounds weird," Auralie said.

Maria shrugged, "I mean, we've seen some weird stuff. Let me grab my gear and we can go. Lucian, do you know where we have to go?"

"She has a lair here on Earth, I know where it is," the world shaker replied.

Maria was being surprisingly cordial to Lucian, all things considering. She was very protective of her sister, and she was worried about what effect Auralie's twin would have on the shadow manipulator.

"Give me a moment, I want to call Wanda and tell her where I'm going," Auralie said.

"Who's Wanda?" Lucian questioned.

Auralie smiled fondly, "the love of my life and the woman of my dreams."

"She's a witch and an Avenger. So if you even think about hurting Auralie....." Maria trailed off.

Lucian sighed, "I know, I know, she'll end me. Look, I'm sorry for what I've done. I was wrong. I just wanted to make the world a better place."

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Auralie said quietly, "you can't force the world to bend to you. You just have to work with the good people and don't let the bad take control. I'm glad you're learning that. So many villains learn that far too late, and that's why they're villains."

Auralie left the room to go call Wanda. She only reached the witch's voicemail, and with a sigh, recorded a message.

Meanwhile, Maria knew that while Auralie was hoping that Lucian could be trusted, there was still a risk. Maria Hill was a skeptical person, and she didn't want to see her sister get hurt. Auralie had a soft spot for her twin, and it could end up blinding her to reason. They couldn't afford for that to happen.

"Lucian, Auralie may be your twin, but she's MY sister. So if you hurt her again, you answer to me. I will put you in a high maintenance jail cell faster than you can realize what's happening. So if you wanna walk free, I suggest you don't lie," Maria said.

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"I understand," the blond man nodded solemnly.

"Good," Maria replied, "then let's get ready. The three of us have a world to save."

A/N: MARIA IS BACK! I love her and Auralie's sisterhood so much. And this is where the action picks up again. Auralie's story is finally coming full circle. I've waited so long for this.

(Don't worry, Wanda is joining the adventure soon. I can't leave my favorite ship doing different things, what kind of author would I be then.)

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