



## xxvi. Into the Dark

**A/N: We have a new cover because you couldn't really see the words that well on the other one, and I wanted a new one. I feel like the new cover really represents Auralie and Wanda's broken but beautiful lives.**

"Well, this certainly fits Elory's villainous aesthetic," Auralie said from the passenger's seat of Maria's car.

"Agreed," Maria said, completely serious, looking at the abandoned power plant. They had been driving for three hours to get to the evil villainess's lair in New Jersey. Why New Jersey? None of them had been able to figure it out.

"Just once I wanna fight a villain who has pizzaz. If I were a villain I would be making dramatic entrances and would probably end up ranting about my backstories and sometimes badly singing. Then again, I watch a lot of cartoons, so....." Auralie trailed o .

Maria grinned, "Sis, you'd be a horrible villain and that's ok. We all like you as a hero."

"Yeah," Auralie responded, "oh, I introduced Bucky to cartoons and I'm now one of his favorite people. Even though I keep beating him at cards. Oh yeah, I play cards with Bucky sometimes. Sam thinks it's funny."

"Cool," Maria said, getting out of the car, "Alright people time to get moving. Nobody die within the first five minutes please."

"What, like Magnus Chase did?" Auralie snickered, "I like those books, even though their Thor isn't much like our Thor."

"What the hell are you two talking about," Lucian wrinkled his nose as he got out of the back of the car. Auralie had called shotgun, something that had seemed to annoy him. Maria found it amusing.

"References and pop culture," Auralie responded, "I'm kind of a nerd if you can't tell."

"Mhm," Lucian pursed his lips non-commentary. Maria gave him a suspicious look. She didn't like him interacting with her sister. She didn't trust him. Her hand went to the gun holstered at her hip. She would need to be prepared to act, just in case, everything went wrong.

The three made their way into the depths of the power plant. It was dark and shadowy, which put Maria on edge but didn't phase Auralie. More shadows were actually good, what with the change in her powers and all.

It was quiet, the only sound their footfalls. Exposed wiring was everywhere, and all the metal had a coat of rust on it. Dust coated the walls, and the place was falling into ruin. There was no sign of Elory anywhere.

"What's going on? Is she here? It looks like no one has been here in a long time," Maria questioned, her voice hostile as she addressed Lucian.

Lucian did not answer her, instead choosing to turn to Auralie and saying, "Is she always this menacing?"

"Only when my sister's betrayer is around," Maria grumbled under her breath.

Auralie let out a weary sigh, "just answer the question, Luca. We have to get this done."

"Just keep walking. This is just the entrance. You'll know we're there when we get there. It's hard to describe, so just trust me," the boy replied.

Maria rolled her eyes, "why wouldn't we? OH RIGHT."

"Maria," Auralie pleaded, looking at her sister. The other woman sighed but calmed down. Auralie shot her sister a small smile, and Maria relaxed. This would be fine. Auralie would be fine. Maria wouldn't let anyone hurt her sister. She had the situation under control.

They continued down into the powerplant, and Auralie realized what her brother had meant. Like Elory's old hideout in Sokovia, this place was full of portals, offering easy escape. The little shimmers and rips in the fabric of space-time fluttered before Auralie's eyes. Auralie took a deep breath. They were a little overwhelming sometimes.

Maria put a calming hand on Auralie's shoulder, which she appreciated. They arrived in front of a big portal that was relatively stationary and easy to see compared to the others.

"This is it," Lucian said.

"Whoa whoa whoa," Maria scowled, "you want us to go through there?"

"Not you," Lucian replied, "just Auralie and I. Our power will allow us through, but you might not survive the experience. Together my sister and I will defeat Elory and come back."

"This is obviously a trap. You aren't going anywhere with her. You could kill her and run," Maria cried.

"I won't. I promise," Lucian held his hands up as Maria reached for her gun.

Auralie said, "let me go, Maria. Elory needs to be stopped. I have to do this. I can win in a fight if this is a trap, I know it. This may be a trap, but the risk is necessary. I have to save the world and I have to know the truth."

Maria sighed, "fine. But if he comes back without you, I'm going to kill him."

Lucian's eyes went wide. Maria meant business. Auralie cocked her head, "that's fair."

"Ali," Lucian protested.

"Just don't kill me. Not that difficult. Now come on," Auralie said. Her twin took a deep breath, and together they stepped through the portal. Maria watched them go, holding her breath. She wanted to race after them, but she didn't know what it would do to her, and she didn't have the power to fight Elory.

If there was one thing Maria Hill hated, it was being powerless. Another thing she hated was seeing her sister in trouble. The combination of those two things..... well, if Lucian were to come back without Auralie, she would have no problem at all ending him.

Auralie was her sister, and she would defend her, even against the girl's own twin.

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"This is Elory's home dimension. A place of magic. It's a dead world now, but in a way, we came from it too," Lucian said to Auralie. They had just arrived in the other dimension, and Auralie was looking around in shock. The sky was thick with heavy smoke, fires burned in the distance, and ash coated the rocky ground.

"She burnt it all down," Auralie whispered.

"Yes," Lucian said, "and now she's going to do the same to our dimension."

"You were right. This is terrible," Auralie commented.

Lucian nodded, "thank you for coming to help me. I wasn't sure you would."

"It's my job as an Avenger to protect the world," Auralie replied, "and I want the truth."

"I get it. It's tantalizing, the idea of knowing where we come from, even if it's all burned down now," Lucian agreed.

"Not about my powers. About you," Auralie corrected him, "I want to know if I can trust you. I want to know if there's a chance I can get my brother back."

Lucian looked at her in surprise.

Auralie sighed, "I've missed you, Luca. I've missed the twin that used to play with me every day when I was little, who used to be my best friend. The twin I thought died in the incident. I want to see if that twin is still alive. That's why I'm here."

"Oh," was all Lucian could say in response.

**A/N: It's a known fact that if you get an unexpected snow day, you work on stories. So there was some protective big sis Maria and some conflicted Auralie and Lucian for you all to enjoy.**

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