



xxxiv. Long Overdue

Auralie was a brave woman. She had fought powerful villains and helped to save the world. But even a hero such as herself needed encouragement from her friends, especially at tough and emotional moments.

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Maria and Wanda had come with her for this. Steve had come too. Pietro was staying behind to watch the apartment, and the rest of the Avengers had things to do.

Where was Auralie going? To visit her parent's graves and pay her respects to her family. It was time to let them go and to accept what had happened, which she had been hurting over for so long.

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The graveyard was in upstate New York, away from the city, more into the country. It was small and well maintained, quiet and out of the way. Peaceful. There were no other visitors. It was a cloudy day, it looked like it was going to rain soon.

The four visitors stood in the entrance to the graveyard. Auralie turned to her friends, "thanks for coming."

"You came with me to Peggy's funeral. I owed you one," Steve replied.

"You know I'd follow you anywhere," Maria said, "now, should we come with you in, or do you want to go yourself?"

"Come with me," Auralie answered.

Wanda nodded and slipped her hand into her wife's. They made their way through the rows of neat tombstones, until Auralie stopped them, seeing the ones with her parent's names on them.

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She knelt down beside her parents' grave markers, her fingers brushing lightly over the engravings.

"Hi mom," she said, her voice breaking. She took a deep breath, "hi dad. It's me. Auralie. I know that I should have come sooner, but.....

I've been busy. Really busy. I, well, I'm a superhero. An Avenger. I save the world, things like that. I know, it sounds dangerous, but it's what I do. Someone has to protect this world and that person is me."

She turned and met Wanda's eyes. The witch nodded, telling her to take her time. Auralie turned back to the graves, "I have some really good friends. They're like a family. Steve and Natasha have looked out for me and taught me a lot. Bucky and Sam make me laugh, Tony listens to me and offers advice, and all of them fight alongside me."

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"It all started with this organization called Shield. They sought me out and trained me. They..... their leader, Nick Fury, he took a chance on me. Then, a few years later, I became an Avenger. I'm still an Avenger," Auralie continued.

"I owe all of it to my sister, Maria Hill. You would have liked Maria a lot, I think," Auralie added, "she's kind and brave and she's the one who saved me when I was younger. She's the greatest sister I could have asked for. I'll always miss the family we had, but Maria gave me a new family, and that one is awesome too."

Tears were beginning to drip down Auralie's face, "Lucian, though, my brother, my twin. He's gone. He was gone a long time ago, I think. He was doomed. That was obvious. But I didn't realize..... I didn't think that I would be the one to end him. I'm so sorry. I'm so so sorry. Hell, I was wrong. I was so wrong, and he paid the price. I'm sorry."

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"Mom, Dad, I'm twenty-three now. I'm a lot taller, and a lot stronger. I think I may be wiser too. I'm still introverted and nerdy though. But that's one of the few things that have stayed the same. I'm not sure really if you would like me or not if you would be proud of the person I've become. I don't think I'll ever figure it out. And maybe it's ok," Auralie said.

Auralie took a deep breath, "when I was nineteen, four years ago, I met a pair of twins, superpowered, like me, and my life changed forever. One of them is named Wanda Maximoff. She is my everything, the love of my life. She is the one who made me feel alive, fully alive. We are married now, Wanda and I. I think you would love her too."

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"I know that you're gone. I've accepted that. I'm accepting that Lucian is gone. And I'm sorry, for what happened to all three of you. I'm learning to deal with it. I will learn to deal with it. I have to. Mom, Dad, I don't remember much about you, I had so little time to know you. You're a fading memory, blissful and sad."

"I loved you though. I loved our family. And I will always be a Shadow, at least in part. But I am Auralie Maximoff now, and it's time to let you go," Auralie finished, getting to her feet.

She had thought they would be done, but her friends had things of their own they wanted to say.

Steve said, "Mr. and Mrs. Shadow, you have an amazing daughter. She is a brave fighter, a smart strategist, and a kind person. She has stood by me through some hard times. I am proud to call her a friend. You should be proud of her as well."

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Auralie wiped at her face. She was tearing up again.

"Thank you," Maria said to the headstones, "thank you for your daughter. She is the best sister I could have ever asked for. I am sad you haven't got to see what she has become, but I am so glad I have gotten to be her family. Thanks for my sister."

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Wanda then knelt in front of the graves, "Your daughter is the most amazing person I have ever met. I love her endlessly, and I will care for her all of my days. I promise. And I always keep my promises, especially to my family. We are family now, even if we have never met."

Wanda stood up, "I am not sure what you were like, but if you were anything like your daughter, you were amazing."

"Thank you so much for coming with me," Auralie said, smiling slightly, "that was really nice."

"Just because you are saying goodbye does not mean you are alone," Wanda replied.

Maria nodded, "yeah, I'm here for you sis."

Auralie grinned and slid one hand into Wanda's, and the other into Maria's. Steve fell into step beside Maria, and the four of them walked out of the graveyard just as it began to drizzle. Auralie's heart felt an ache for her parents, for her family, but she also felt as though a huge weight had been lifted off of her.

It had been hard, but it had been time to say goodbye. She couldn't hold onto the past forever. She had a life now, and it was a good one.

Auralie wasn't sure if her parents would have been proud of her, but she was rather proud of herself, and that was just as important. If not more.

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A/N: I really like this chapter. I think that it's time Auralie lets go of the past and embraces her new life with Wanda and the new Avengers. I think that it's important to her development as a character, which I have worked very hard on.

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