



xxvi. Incoming

Natasha was trying to reach the top of Stark Tower, but Loki had other ideas. The god of mischief had taken over a speeder and was following the Shield Agent, firing at her. Natasha looked around for help, but Steve had gone to rescue people from one of the buildings, Thor and Banner were in the middle of their own fight, and Auralie and Tony were on the other side of the city chasing some stray aliens. Fortunately, her best friend noticed her plight and shot an arrow at the invader.

Loki caught the arrow with surprisingly fast reflexes. But Clint had taken no chances, and the arrow detonated in his hand, sending him flying through a glass window of Stark Tower and knocking the stupid horn helmet off his head. Natasha made it to the top, where the Tesseract was.

The archer still had a lot of enemies to deal with, and not enough arrows. So he used his last arrow to repel the side of the building in what would come to be recognized as a truly badass move.

Meanwhile, Steve had managed to save the civilians, but had lost his mask and was on his knees. However, Thor was there to help him up. The god pulled the soldier to his feet and said, "ready for another bout?"

Steve laughed, "what, you getting sleepy?"

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"I recognize the council has made a decision, but given that it's a stupid ass decision, I've elected to ignore it," Fury yelled at the World Security Council.

"That's not your call," one of the council members fired back.

Fury glowered, "until I am absolutely sure my team cannot hold the city I will not order a nuclear strike against a civilian population." He shut off the communications array and stormed to the bridge. He had hoped they would listen to him, but they were politicians, common sense was not in their nature.

So he was not surprised when Maria Hill yelled, "everyone, we have a rogue bird!"

Fury himself ran to take it down. He carried a large firearm and shot down the rogue bird before it could do any damage. But it had been a decoy. The real bird took to the sky before Fury could do anything to stop it. He took out his pistol out of instinct but knew it couldn't do anything. So he decided to call Stark and hoped his team could handle one more problem.

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Natasha stood atop the tower, looking at the Tesseract and the forcefield that surrounded it. Dr. Selvik, who had been fixed through the power of cognitive recalibration, examined it with her.

"It's alright, you didn't know what you were doing," Natasha reassured him.

"Actually, I think I did," Selvik muttered, "There's a key that can shut the cube down. And I'm looking right at it."

He was looking at the scepter, which had fallen on the balcony below them. Natasha called Auralie over and had the teen retrieve it for them. She gave the redhead the scepter, and the three of them stood there, ready to shut it down at a moment's notice.

Auralie felt her heart racing. She realized her theory about the scepter and the cube being separate was probably true. It would take an equal energy force to shut it down, which meant the scepter gem was on the same level as the cube.

"I can shut it down," Natasha yelled, "Can anyone hear me? I can shut it down."

"Do it," Steve yelled back.

"No wait," Tony interjected, "I have a nuke coming in, and I know just where to put it."

"Stark, you know that's a one-way trip," Steve said, but he got no answer.

Tony grabbed the nuke and directed it into the portal. Auralie held her breath as he went up, worried about her friend. She held her breath as he didn't come back down, and she hoped, she hoped so hard. With the exception of Maria, Auralie did not allow herself to love, but that didn't mean she didn't care. And all of the people who had fought with her for this city and their world, she cared about them. She didn't want to lose them. Any of them.

"Shut it down," Steve called as a minute passed by.

Auralie called, "but Tony's still up there!"

Steve didn't hear, and he still would have made the same call. He wanted Tony to be alright, but he had to ensure the world could survive another day.

Natasha pressed the scepter to the cube and the portal began to close. The forcefield dissipated, and the invasion was over. Upon being disconnected, the Chitauri shut down, they probably had some sort of hive mind that made it that way.

Auralie finally let out her breath when she saw Tony fall through the portal just as it closed. But when she saw he wasn't stopping or slowing down, her fear returned. On the ground, Thor prepared to go get him, but the Hulk took care of that. He caught Tony and brought him back to the ground.

Steve ripped the Iron Man mask off and Tony lay still for a moment. Then the Hulk let out a roar and he was startled awake.

"What happened," Tony asked, "please tell me nobody kissed me."

Steve looked up, taking a breath, "we won."

Tony took this in, then said, "YAY! Let's just not come in tomorrow. Everyone take a day. Ok? Have you ever tried shawarma? There's a shawarma joint a few miles away. I don't know what it is, but I wanna try it."

"I'll try it with you," Auralie said, she had sat down and taken a moment, allowing the relief to seep into her very bones. Natasha was sitting beside her, doing the same.

"Not so fast," Steve sighed, "we still have a lot to do."

"And then shawarma a er," Tony declared.

"YES," Auralie agreed.

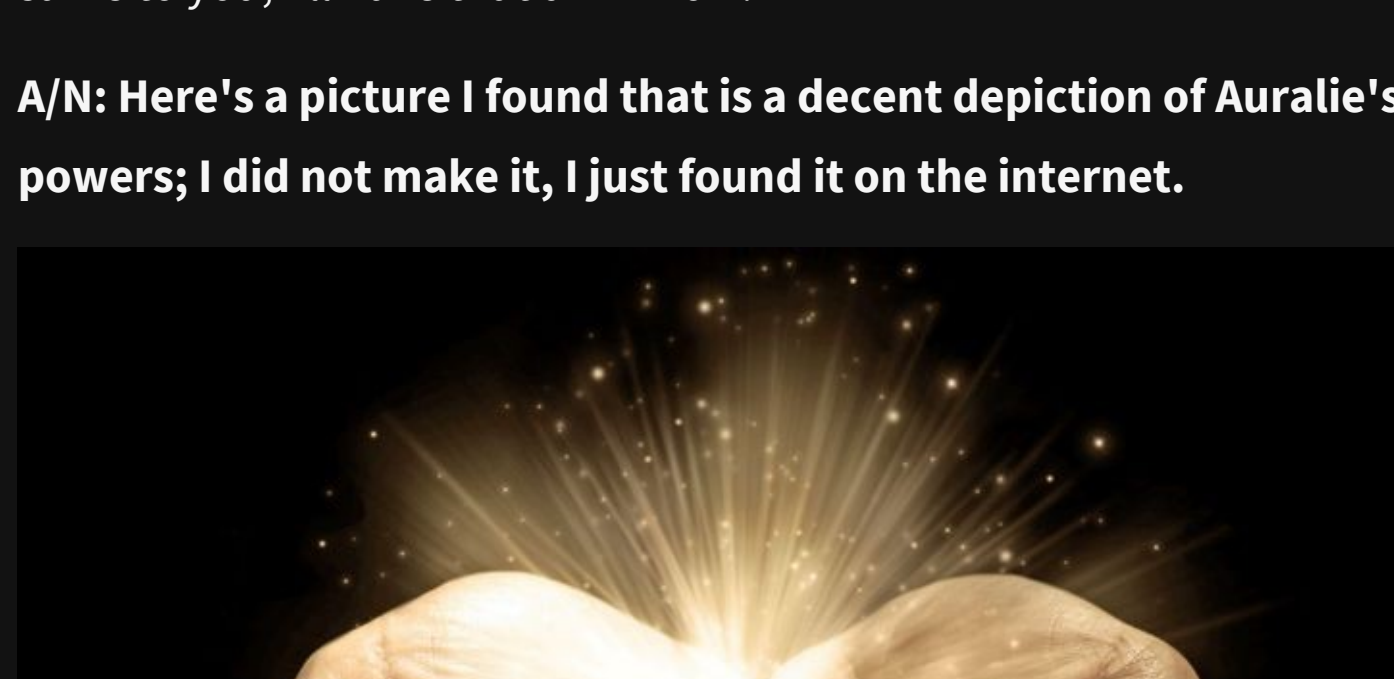
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The Avengers, beaten, bruised, tired, and victorious, gathered around the god of mischief, who was only just getting up from the floor of Stark Tower, where the Hulk had beaten him senseless. Bruce really had proved him to be a puny god.

Loki sat up, just as beaten up as the heroes, who were all looking down at him. Natasha had the scepter, and Auralie was beside her, and even though all she wanted to do was eat shawarma, shower, hug her sister, and go to sleep, she glared at the god, her palms lighting up, ready to fight if need be.

But as Clint pointed his bow at Loki, the god just said, "if it's all the same to you, I'll have that drink now."

A/N: Here's a picture I found that is a decent depiction of Auralie's powers; I did not make it, I just found it on the internet.



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