

## XLV. A ermath

It was a bit later that Sam and Auralie were sitting in a hospital room, waiting for Steve to wake up. They had been there ever since their own injuries were declared treated, hoping that their friend, who was the most battered and hurt of them all, would be ok. Auralie had heard nothing about Bucky in those past days, and she hoped he was alright.

Sam had cued up the Troubleman soundtrack. Auralie hummed along and read her book as they sat there.

Then Steve opened his eyes. He heard the music, he saw the blonde head that was Auralie's and he saw Sam. He looked at Sam and said, "on your le ."

Sam looked up and smiled. Auralie rushed over to his bedside, reaching for his hand, a beaming smile gracing her face. Steve smiled back, "Hey there kiddo, what happened?"

Auralie smiled, "a whole lot of shit happened. But we're ok. Now come on, let's get you discharged so we can watch Natasha give an interview."

Sam laughed, "I'll go call a nurse."

"Auralie," Steve asked as Sam le the room, "Bucky....."

Auralie squeezed Steve's hand, "he's alright. He needs some time to sort his life out, but he's alive and he's starting to remember."

"I take it he ran away," Steve sighed.

Auralie replied, "yes. But something tells me we'll see him again."

The three of them were sitting by a TV in Sam's house, watching the interview before actually heading out to meet Natasha. Auralie was fidgeting with the drawstrings on her Ravenclaw hoodie. She was nervous. Natasha was taking a great risk by putting herself out there like that.

The feed came on, and Auralie spotted the redhead, sitting amongst a group of annoyed looking politicians. One of them said, "Miss Romano , given your background, some people think you belong in a penitentiary, not mouthing o on Capitol Hill."

"You aren't going to put me in a prison," Natasha replied, collected as ever, "you're not going to put any of us in a prison. Do you know why?"

"Do tell us," the man said sardonically.

"Because you need us," Natasha replied, "so go ahead, come a er me. You know where to find me." She got up and walked away, confident, strong, at ease. Auralie found herself beaming with pride.

But Natasha was right, in a way. The world needed Steve to lead them and inspire them, Sam to encourage them to carry on, and Natasha to show them that they could change. They needed Maria to be a pillar of strength, the calm in the storm, and Nick to make the tough choices. They even needed Bucky, to give them a reason to fight. And maybe they needed Auralie, though in what way she did not know.

"Well, time to get going," Sam said, turning o the TV.

Steve and Auralie got to their feet, and Steve asked, "Ali, what's Maria doing?"

"Oh, she's in New York, working for Tony actually. I talked to her yesterday, she's good. I talked to Tony too and he's glad to have her, she's very helpful to him. Plus she already has the apartment up their and all," Auralie informed them, "I'll end up back with her eventually, once all of this has settled down. And until then, I have you guys."

"Aww, that's cute, but can we go now?" Sam yelled.

They stood with Fury, in front of the false grave bearing the director's name. Auralie had debated bringing flowers as a sarcastic joke but had decided not to since it would take too much time and Sam was already complaining about them being late.

"I'm heading to New York tonight," Fury was saying to Steve, "I was wondering if you wanted to come with me?"

Steve shook his head, "no, I have something else to take care of."

"What about you Wilson? I could use a man like you." Fury had turned to Sam.

Sam replied, "I'm more of a soldier than a spy."

"Shadow?" Fury asked.

Auralie smiled, "sorry Sir, but I think I'm going to stick with Cap and Falcon for a bit. Say hi to Maria for me."

"Alright," he said, turning and walking away, "if anyone asks for me, tell them they can find me right here."

"You should be excited, that's about as close to a thank you as he gets," Natasha cried, walking over to them.

"Not going with him?" Steve asked, surprised.

Natasha shook her head, "Nope."

"Not staying here?" he said in a disappointed sort of way.

"NO," Natasha's smile faded, "I blew all my covers, I have to go find a new one."

Steve shrugged, "that could take a while."

"I'm counting on it," Nat laughed.

Auralie interjected, "well you know if you ever want to be with us, there's a place for you on this team, both the Avengers and this little group." Natasha smiled at the younger girl, thanking her, but denying the o er.

She took out a file folder, "I talked to some old associates from the KGB. They gave me this." Steve took the file and opened it. Auralie peered around him and saw a picture of Bucky. It was information that might be useful.

Natasha stepped back and looked at Steve, "do me a favor. Call that nurse." Auralie frowned. She personally had never thought Steve and Sharon had chemistry, but that was just her.

"She's not a nurse," Steve protested.

Natasha sighed, "and you're not a Shield Agent."

"What was her name again?" Steve asked.

Natasha replied, "Sharon. She's nice." Auralie rolled her eyes. Steve and Sharon was not a good idea. How could Natasha and Steve not see that? Auralie would never know. But if the lesbian who had a bit of a fear of falling in love could see that it wasn't meant to be, it wasn't.

Natasha leaned up and pressed a kiss to Steve's cheek. She drew away and began to leave. Then, as if having second thoughts, she turned around. Auralie almost hoped that she was deciding to come with them. But Natasha just said, "be careful Steve, you might not want to pull on that thread."

She le , and Sam turned to Steve, "she might be right. It could be dangerous."

Auralie sighed, "story of my life right there."

Steve replied, "I have to. But it could be dangerous. You don't have to come along."

"I know," Sam answered, looking at the ground. Then he looked up and met Steve's eyes, "when do we start?"

Auralie looked between the two men, and she smiled. They were going a er Bucky. But a curious dread was filling her up. She had the strangest feeling that they were entering a new age.

**A/N: Just one more chapter, the one that I have been so excited to write, and then part one is over and we finally get to Age of Ultron and Wanda.**

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