



ix. The Mind Stone

"I'm only gonna say this once," Steve yelled at Tony. They were in the lab, Tony and Bruce were about to experiment on the stone and bring another artificial being into play. It was dark now, and Auralie's gut turned at the thought that they were fighting while Ultron was still out there.

"How about nonce," Tony replied sarcastically.

Steve gritted his teeth, "shut it down."

"No," Tony glared at his teammates.

"You don't know what you're doing," Steve added.

"And you do," Bruce said, his voice taking on a harsh edge that was very unlike him, "she's not in your head."

Auralie stepped in front of the twins protectively. Wanda interjected, as rationally as possible, "I know you're angry."

"Oh, I'm more than angry, I could choke you out without even turning a shade," Bruce yelled.

"Banner," Auralie said, "no one is harming anyone else unless you wanna go kick Ultron's behind."

Steve and Tony, meanwhile, had continued arguing over Tony's plans. Pietro sighed, fed up with all of this, and sped around, unplugging everything. He sped back to his original spot, speaking up, "oh, no no no, go on, you were saying."

That was when Clint, who had gone to find Nat's location, shot one of his special arrows and caused the floor to collapse under Pietro (who he was still very pissed o at). Wanda screamed her brother's name and Auralie let out a gasp of surprise.

"What," Clint asked the speedster, smirking, "you didn't see that coming?"

Wanda dashed forward to go help her brother, but Bruce came up behind and grabbed her. He said angrily, "go ahead, piss me o ."

"Let her go," Auralie barked, but Wanda could take care of herself. Her free hand was surrounded by red magic, which she sent through herself and into Banner's chest, throwing him away from her.

"Damn," Auralie whispered. Wanda was incredibly powerful and just watching the motions she used to control her powers, well, it entranced the light manipulator.

At that moment, the only thing that could possibly make the chaotic scene even more crazy happened. Thor came crashing in, his hammer surrounded by lightning. Auralie screamed as he brought it down on the Cradle. What the hell did the Asgardian think he was doing?

Thor stood aside as a new being came about. The android, all red and silver, the yellow stone set in his forehead, smoke rolling o his form. Wanda and Auralie both gasped in shock. They had not thought Thor would help create such a thing.

That was when he flew towards Thor, and Auralie shot a bolt of light at him, propelling him past the Asgardian and saving her friend. The Android flew forward, only stopping when he reached the window.

He looked out over the city, and he seemed to have calmed down, for he was watching and creating clothes for himself, and not trying to murder them. He flew back down and apologized. He sounded like Jarvis.

"Why does he sound like Jarvis?" Steve voiced Auralie's thoughts.

"We were transferring Jarvis's conscious to it, and it must have worked at least partially," Bruce explained.

Auralie sighed, "I think the better question is, Thor what the hell?"

"I had a vision and at the center of it was that stone," Thor said, "it's one of the infinity stones, and it sucked up all life around it. Their powers, the horrors in our heads, they are all connected to the stone. But we need it on our side."

"Are you on our side?" Steve asked.

"It's complicated," Jarvis but not Jarvis explained, "I am on the side of life. Ultron isn't."

Wanda stepped forward, "I looked in your head, and saw annihilation."

"Look again," the android replied.

"So you aren't Ultron?" Auralie asked, looking him in the eye as if daring him to lie to her.

He answered, "I am not Ultron or Jarvis. I am....."

"Vision," Auralie suggested, sarcastically, "that seems to be what Thor's calling you anyways."

"Vision," he repeated and Auralie groaned, realizing she had just named the robot. Vision, as he had been dubbed, continued, "I do not want to kill Ultron. He is unique and he is in pain. But that pain will roll over the earth. So he must be destroyed, every form he's built, every trace of his presence on the net. We have to act now, and not one of us can do it without the others. Maybe I am a monster, I don't think I'd know if I was one. I'm not what you are and not what you intended. I have no way to make you trust me. But we need to go."

He had picked up the hammer and held it out to Thor. The room went silent, and everyone froze, except for Auralie and Clint (who had come up a little bit ago with Pietro) who exchanged eye rolls. They were completely used to stu like this by now.

"Go where?" Steve asked.

"Sokovia," Clint replied, "that's where he's keeping Nat."

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Soon they were getting ready. Clint looked at a picture of his wife and kids. Steve and Tony and Bruce were formulating a plan. Thor and Vision were talking (Vision had created a cape, despite Auralie's best attempts to explain the Incredibles and "no capes") about something, probably to do with hammers and worthiness.

Auralie helped Wanda and Pietro get new gear. She found some sneakers for Pietro, who put them on, a grateful expression on his face. Then he grabbed an exercise shirt, taking o his other shirt and putting the blue one on. Wanda and Auralie rolled their eyes. Wanda was so done with her brother and his dramatics. Auralie just didn't give a damn about men and their muscles.

Pietro looked at the other thing Auralie was holding. A red leather jacket that she had "borrowed" from Nat. She thought it would be a decent fit on Wanda. Pietro grinned and tossed it to his sister. She looked down at it, but put it on.

Then Auralie and the twins took their seats on the quinjet. Steve made his speech about saving the people of Sokovia.

He concluded with, "Ultron thinks we're monsters. This isn't just about beating him. It's about whether he's right."

Auralie and Wanda exchanged looks. Wanda looked down. She had done some terrible things. She hoped she could be redeemed, but she feared that her soul was beyond saving. Auralie reached out and took the other woman's hand.

Auralie sometimes didn't know if she was a monster or not. She didn't think she was, but sometimes she wouldn't be able to save someone, or she would be thinking about what her brother had become and she would wonder if deep down, she was just as horrible as the bad guys she faced. But looking into Wanda's eyes, she realized that maybe none of them were bad, no matter what they had done, because they were trying to make it right. Maybe that was enough.

"I'll face him," Tony said, "Iron Man's the one he's waiting for."

"It's true," Vision called, "he hates you the most."

Auralie shot a death glare at the android. Tony didn't need to hear that sort of thing before a battle. Tony sighed, "there's no way we're all getting through this."

Steve shrugged, "I have no plans for tomorrow night."

Auralie gave him a small smile, "I never have any plans. I'm kind of an introvert who rarely wants to leave the house."

"So I've noticed," Tony muttered.

Steve said at the same time, "that's true."

They exchanged confused looks and Auralie laughed. Steve and Tony could be polar opposites at times, but in the end, they both loved their friends, and they both would work to protect the world. And make commentary through the whole journey.