



xxvi. Controlling Fear

Wanda Maximoff stood by the window, looking out at the dark city. She was under house arrest because they didn't trust her not to harm anyone. Part of Wanda felt like she deserved it. But the other part kept repeating Auralie's words, telling Wanda that she was not a monster, that she deserved compassion.

Wanda had come to care greatly for Auralie Shadow over the course of a year. Though the others, especially Clint and Steve, had been good to her, Auralie was the first to truly befriend her. Auralie had helped her cope with those early days of Pietro's death, and though Wanda would always feel an aching where her brother should be in her heart, she no longer feared that she would lose herself in grief. Auralie had introduced Wanda to fun and joy, and talked about magic with her, and been the best friend she could ask for. And Wanda had fallen hard.

Wanda loved Auralie's intelligence and her compassion. Wanda loved the way Auralie treated her like a human being, not like a nightmare. She loved the feel of Auralie's hand in her own, or Auralie's arms around her. Wanda Maximoff had never been in love before, but she had a feeling that was changing, all because of a light manipulator who had looked at her without fear.

Wanda hoped that wherever Auralie was, she was alright.

Suddenly, a fire flared up in the distance, a ways away from the compound. Vision floated over beside a stunned Wanda. He said, "stay here, please."

Wanda did as she was told. In truth, she wanted to go, to prove that she could do this. She wanted to be the hero that her brother would want her to be. But Wanda could not bring herself to. She feared making things worse.

Then, she heard a noise. Her powers latched on to a knife and sent it flying, almost messing up Clint Barton's face. Clint, unphased by this sort of thing, just pushed it away and sighed, "what, I retire for five minutes and it all goes to shit?"

"Oh my," Wanda breathed, walking towards him, "what are you doing here?"

"Disappointing my kids," Clint muttered, "come on, Cap needs our help." He took her hand and tried to lead her forward, but she pulled away.

Wanda shook her head, "I've caused enough problems."

Clint sighed and turned to face her, "Look, Wanda, if you want to sit around and mope, you go to school. You wanna make amends, you get on your ass. Steve needs you. Auralie needs you."

That made Wanda think. She wanted to help Steve, and she wanted to make amends. She wanted to be the hero her brother had been, the hero he believed she could be. If Pietro could not protect the world he had been forced to leave, then Wanda would carry on his legacy and protect it for him. That was why she had joined the Avengers.

Besides, if Auralie needed her, she would go. Wanda Maximoff would go anywhere for those that she loved.

She fell into step beside Clint but then heard Vision's voice call out, "Agent Barton, you should not be here."

Clint shot an arrow in response, but Vision phased and it went right through him. He came up behind Clint before the other man could run, and grabbed him.

Vision said, "Agent Barton, you know you cannot overpower me."

"I know," Clint choked out, "but she can."

"Vision, that's enough," Wanda approached with newfound determination, magic rolling inside her hands, "let him go, I'm leaving."

"I can't let you," he replied.

"Then I'm sorry," Wanda extended her arms. She felt the mind stone, felt its power. But her power was greater, and she reached out, taking control of it, making it her own, and forcing Vision to change his density, shoving him towards the floor. Clint rolled away, leaving her to it.

"If you do this, they'll never stop being afraid of you," Vision said.

Wanda twisted the orb of magic. So what if they feared her. She had her brother's memory to guide her, good friends to fight with, and Auralie Shadow, who would never fear her. Most important of all, she had herself, and it was time to love the person she was because she was not a bad woman.

"I can't control their fear," she forced him downwards, "only my own."

With a final spurt of magic, he was sent through the floors. Clint got to his feet and together the two ran from the premises. According to Clint, they had one more person to pick up, a guy by the name of Scott Lang, AKA Ant-Man, who apparently met Falcon a few months ago.

Wanda barely heard. It was as if the barrier of fear had broken down in her mind. She felt unstoppable. She felt like all the magic in the world.

She knew her brother would have been proud of her, taking control of her destiny and fighting for her freedom. She wished Pietro had been there to see her.

But Pietro had been le in the past, and now the Wanda who hated and feared herself would be as well. Wanda vowed not to lose sight of who she was again, no matter how this ended. She had always loved strongly, first her brother, now Auralie, and she deserved to give herself that same love and self-confidence.

She knew she could not be a bad woman, otherwise, Clint and Steve and Sam and Nat would never have let her into their team. She knew that Auralie would not have befriended her if she was bad. It had just taken a while for her own mind to realize she was not bad. The feeling was liberating.

Excitement fluttered in Wanda's heart. She was free, heading for her friends and the woman she had fallen for. While the future seemed big and bleak, Wanda figured that she could face it. Of course, she did not know what was ahead, but being on top of the world, just for a moment, it felt good.

Almost as amazing as being beside Auralie Shadow again would.

Wanda smiled at the thought. Her wonderful Auralie, who had inspired her to break free of limits. Who did not fear her magic, who found it fascinating. Who liked her for who she was.

Wanda gazed straight ahead, ready to face the future and fight alongside the woman she cared for. She knew she could face it.

It was amazing what happened when you started controlling fear.

A/N: As you can see, this is the chapter where Wanda starts to become more confident, and believe in herself more, largely in part to Auralie's influence. Auralie, meanwhile, is more confused. There's a bit of role reversal here. Auralie used to be the one comforting Wanda, and now we'll see Wanda comforting Auralie through later events. It's going to be an interesting dynamic.

Also, I just love this chapter because I love this scene in the movies. Wanda literally takes control of an infinity stone. She's awesome.

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