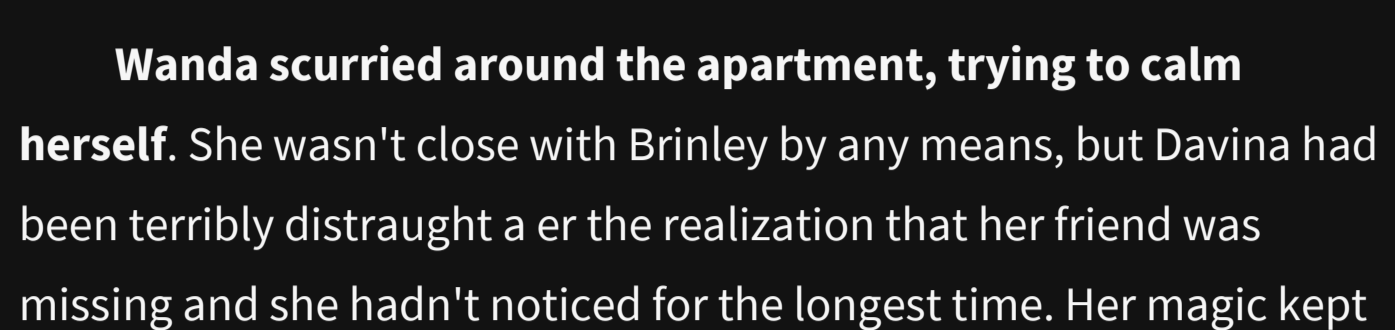


『 xii. MOTHER HEN』



▾ chapter twelve, MOTHER HEN ▸



Wanda scurried around the apartment, trying to calm herself. She wasn't close with Brinley by any means, but Davina had been terribly distraught after the realization that her friend was missing and she hadn't noticed for the longest time. Her magic kept flaring and she wanted more than anything to really use it, to destroy something, but she didn't. She couldn't do that.

She went to the guest room of Desmond's apartment where Davina was staying while they tried to find Brinley. She had lying down on the bed staring at the wall and saying nothing, not even turning to see who was standing in the doorway. No, she probably knew already that it was the Maximo girl; no one else checked up on her because no one else knew her well enough.

Desmond didn't like social contact anyway, which was why he was hoisting himself up in his room while he tried to find his friend. Sam and Bucky were in the other apartment annoying each other while simultaneously trying to act calm. Bucky couldn't help but think it was his fault, which reminded her of herself.

The whole situation brought her back to a er Ultron. She remembered being taken into the team, yet trapped in the tower since they were still scared of her. Clint – he trusted her, he did. And Clint hurt just as she was because he was the one who had seen her brother die. Been part of the reason why he sacrificed himself. Steve opened up his arms to her, welcoming her in as he did with everyone else. Sam followed, naturally. And Vision, who was still getting acquainted with the world, let her in because he didn't know better – coming from Stark.

But there were others who weren't as welcoming to her. Natasha was always calculating, always watching her and it made her skin crawl. It reminded her of before, in the facility with people watching her every move as her powers were awoken by them. A lab rat. And Stark, naturally, distrusted her. She didn't mind his coldness much, or how he wouldn't even stay in the same room as her, she didn't want him there either. Both were happy if they went days on end without seeing the other.

Stark paid for his funeral, Stark gave her a place to live, but she didn't want to even be in the same floor as him. He wasn't the enemy anymore but a teammate yet she still couldn't find it in herself to get close with him. Even more than that, even more than her digging into his mind and showing him his worst nightmare, he was angry at her for Banner. Now he was gone. It had been over two years and there had still been no sign of him. He was gone in space, maybe he was dead. And she knew that Stark blamed her for him, but she blamed him for a lot too.

But she remembered the first months she was there. How she didn't even want to leave her room, too sad. Grieving not just her best friend or brother; but her twin. Pietro was dead and she couldn't help but think she was partially to blame. She was the one who wanted to sign up for the testing, to devote herself to her country and to get back at Stark one day for what he did to their family. She was the one who forced him into it, not wanting to leave her brother. Yet here she was; here without her brother.

Wanda sighed to herself and left the room. She couldn't stand looking at how sad Davina was, know how much she was beating herself up for not even realizing...

She turned away from the door and went to the kitchen where Steve was making a cup of coffee. He smiled when he saw Wanda. "You want some?" he offered to pour her a cup.

"I'll get it, don't worry," and she moved over to the coffee pot – because Desmond said that making one cup at a time wasn't efficient for the amount that he actually drank throughout the day – to pour herself a cup.

Desmond was truly a strange creature. He wasn't too secretive, but his profession was off the table. All the refugees knew was that he was close with his boss for personal work he used to do before being placed where he currently was and that he could work from home if needed because there was that much trust in him and his skill to not having any of the work leaked. So, most days, he stayed home.

"Has Desmond come out any?" Wanda asked Steve, taking a sip of the warm drink.

He shook her head and her heart dropped a little. It had been days now they had been looking for her, and yet there was still no sign of the woman.

"No," Steve confirmed with his voice, "He's been holed in there since last night and I don't think I've seen him eat anything for a while. Should I – Should I go make something for him and leave it in his room?"

"If you think that will help him," Wanda told him. Steve liked cooking for others, especially since he was always worrying about them.

Steve looked around the kitchen. "Yeah, uh, do you think he likes cheese in his eggs?"

Wanda shook her head, "Sorry, no. Don't put any just in case, or you could go ask him."

"No. If I ask then he'll know I'm cooking and he doesn't like people doing stuff for him and I need to make sure eats this," Steve said.

"Are Bucky and Sam okay?" Wanda asked as she moved to sit at the counter, hands still on the mug. "I haven't seen them since yesterday."

Steve shrugged, getting the eggs from the fridge before looking for a pan. "I don't know. I've been staying here and they haven't come over," he then paused, "I should make eggs for them, shouldn't I?"

Wanda rolled her eyes, "Steve, they are grown men. I'm sure that they've cooked something for themselves."

"Maybe," Steve agreed, "But Buck hasn't been caring for himself on his own and Sam won't do anything for him, and they don't even like each other so I don't know if they've killed each other yet."

"I'll go check up on them while you make Desmond eggs, how does that sound?" Wanda asked, standing up and taking her cup with her. She took another sip as she waited to see if Steve would agree to that or if he'd want to do it himself.

"Yeah, yeah. That sounds good. Oh! How's Davina? Doesn't she have work tonight?" Steve asked.

Wanda pursed her lips. "She's trying to cope with everything. Give her time, she didn't even realize that her friend was missing and she feels guilty. I'll get her up for her shift later, she's not gonna miss work."

"Okay," Steve nodded and Wanda heard laughter, shaking her head and going across the hall and opening the door.

♡

As she promised Steve, Wanda was able to get Davina up for her shift at the flower shop. She even got the girl showered and eating a meal before she left. Then, when Davina was out the door, she was on her own as Wanda stayed in the apartment awaiting the minute that Desmond came out with the great news that he knows where Brinley is hiding.

She huddled into her coat just before she got the shop, speeding up to get inside faster. Once in, she went straight to the back to get her nametag and put her coat down. Of course, when she got out the front, Steve was there waiting for her.

There was an old woman again, looking around at the flowers. Ms. Avery was a lovely woman who came in once a month to get flowers to place on her husband's grave. Davina looked seeing her, she was always so nice and had a twinkle in her eye.

"Hello, Ms. Avery," Davina greeted when she came to the counter, ready to check up. "Daisies this time?"

Ms. Avery nodded, "Yes. Kevin loved them. We had them in the house all the time and it's the anniversary of his death coming up...so I thought daisies would be the best this month."

Davina's expression softened as she rang up the flowers. She always felt such sympathy for those who got flowers for the cemetery. "Do you have anyone to come with you?" she asked, "if you don't, I'll be glad to go."

"Oh, don't worry about it, dear," Ms. Avery shook her head, "My grandkids are coming with me. Well, I know at least one of them is coming. Julius usually goes with me for his anniversary, I've told you about him before, right?"

"I think I remember hearing about Julius," Davina nodded, "It's nice of him to come with you. What about the others?"

"Well, Emerson is always busy with her work, especially since she just got a new job. And Beckham doesn't like graveyards, so he sends support from home," the old woman explained.

"Well," Davina handed the flowers back to her, "I hope that they look forever beautiful. I know he'll appreciate them."

"Thank you, dear," Ms. Avery smiled, leaving the shop as the bell rang to announce it, which meant that Davina was now alone with Stevie – the joy.

Davina sighed to herself as she turned to her co-worker who was already smirking at her. She really wasn't in the mood to deal with him that night, already on edge because they still hadn't found Brinley...usually, she had patience to lend towards his flirting, but tonight...she didn't want to deal with him.

"So," Stevie started, getting up so he could be closer to her, "I was just wandering if you wanted to go back to my place after this. We haven't been hanging out as much since Macy started joining our shifts together."

Uncomfortable, Davina moved away from his advances. She turned away from him and out towards the empty shop. "Yeah. I requested for her to join us."

Stevie frowned. "Why? Isn't it so much better when it's just the two of us in an empty shop, all the time to talk and, well, maybe something else..."

Again, Davina moved away from him. "Look, Stevie," she started, "I'm not going to go back to your place."

"Then we can go back to yours, if that would make you more comfortable," Stevie suggested, "Your roommate wouldn't mind, would she?"

That caused her to freeze for a moment. Brinley was gone – she was gone and she hadn't even realized for so long. She could be anywhere in the world and Davina let her go by not asking around sooner. It was all her fault, wasn't it?

"Stevie, you're not coming over there," Davina got out without choking on tears at the thought of Brinley.

Stevie frowned, "The movies, then? Or the diner that's pretty close to here. Apple or something."

"Apple's Eye," Davina corrected, "And we're not gonna hang out there either. Look, I don't wanna meet up with you outside of work."

"But how can we get closer? Don't you wanna get closer, Davina?" Stevie asked, oblivious as ever.

Davina didn't want to make it awkward between them, but it was uncomfortable. She had been dealing with Stevie's flirting, but too long and she couldn't take it anymore. She was already on edge and this was pushing her over.

"No, I don't wanna get closer with you. I don't wanna be with you in any way. We can talk here, maybe, but stop flirting. We're never going to get together, we're never going to date. I'm not gonna be your girlfriend and you're not gonna be my boyfriend. I don't like you like that and I never will, so please stop flirting with me," Davina said as calmly as she could, but she was so fed up.

But Stevie looked heartbroken. Absolutely, broken as he stared at Davina before clearing his throat and turning away from her. He didn't say anything for the rest of the night and Davina didn't strike up any conversation either.

When her shift ended, she went back to Desmond's apartment, not wanting to be alone but also wanting to be right there if news of Brinley's appearance comes.