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Silence struck harder the second time around.
Just when I thought utter isolation was hard, having to watch Wanda
and Nat disappear down the hall without ever being allowed to set
foot outside of my door was a di erent range of bittersweet. A whole
day of what I'd call progress, with Wanda and Nat being around to fill
the space made the apartment feel like it could possibly be home. It
didn't feel like a cage and I didn't, just for a moment, feel like some
monster who had to be hidden away once again.
Amidst adjusting back to what was meant to be, the night felt a lot
colder and the air was stiller than I was used to. Maybe having them
around did more damage than good, because all throughout the next
couple of nights, no matter how many times I play the records or let
the white noise of the television fill the apartment- it almost felt
incomplete. I barely got a wink of sleep trying to drown out the
isolation, my mind running a million miles an hour as I stared up at
the ceiling. At this point, I had probably memorized every crack.
Most nights, what occupied my mind- as much as it pains me to
admit, was what transpired at the roo op. God, it was like a plague I
couldn't shake, the way my thoughts would keep dri ing back to
that, to the way she pulled me in, to the way we just stood there, me
frozen and Wanda shattered in a way I never thought I'd see. She was
stifling her sobs, restricting her breathing so much I could practically
feel her trembling.
It was poignant and gentle all at once, the way she fell apart in my
arms like I've been granted a view nobody in the world had ever seen.
In the tenderness of her cries, I could tell just how much of her was
torn apart- just like me. I could never be brave enough to show her,
but in that moment she was the bravest one I'd ever known. We
didn't speak much of it a er; I just stood with her as we looked out
onto the city. For the first time, we didn't need words. We kind of just
basked in the fleeting vulnerability that moment brought, neither one
of us feeling the need to shoot our defences up the way we used to.
I guess I could say that things have definitely shi ed into somewhat
of a grey area between us. I didn't resent her the way I used to, but
then that leaves me at a space that was entirely foreign. Did I like her?
Did I consider her a friend? Do I trust her? I couldn't find definite
answers no matter how hard I tried.
All I knew is that I didn't mind having her around now, and I'm not
sure if I'd ever truly understand what that meant for us. I wasn't even
sure if she felt the same way, if she spent the ride back regretting that
moment- if by the next time we'd see each other we'd only fall back to
the hostility we knew best.
God, just when I thought things couldn't get even more complicated.
"Ew, why are you all sulky?" Martina grimaces as she enters the
bedroom. At that point, I was just used to having her randomly pop
in, like a pest I couldn't get rid of. A ernoon has come without me
even realizing, or getting out of bed for the matter.
"I'm not sulky." I groan, keeping my eyes glued to the television.
Maybe if I didn't look at her, she'd just magically disappear. It would
have been a nice treat.
"You look sulky. Have you even showered?" She asks as she plops
onto the space next to me, the dip in the bed barely fazing me as I
sink into silence with my arms tightly knit around a pillow.
"Fuck o ." I grumble, mushing my face into the so cushion.
"You smell."
"You annoy me."
"I'm practically your babysitter. Go and take a shower, you reek." Her
small hands press upon my back as she tries to nudge me o the bed
with as much strength as she could muster. I barely moved.
"Leave me alone."
"No, I promised Nat I'd look a er you. She said she'd pay me." She
continues to try, little staggered hu s slipping from her lips as I
hastily turn over to face her.
"Leave me alone. I can't deal with you today." I say seriously,
watching her eyes go over me like she was trying to pick my brain
apart.
"You've been a big sad blob since they le . Why?" She questions,
sounding like she was asking herself more than me as I only plop
back into place.
"I'm fine."
"You miss the witch." She says in somewhat of an 'aha' moment,
looking genuinely pleased with herself for the deduction.
"What? No! That's crazy, why would you even think that?" Okay so
maybe I responded a little too quickly, because her smirk only grew
bigger as she rests her back against the headboard.
"I saw you at the roo op." She shrugs casually. My eyes nearly fall out
of my head at her revelation, and obviously, this only fuels her
amusement.
"Oh please, every time I catch you two you're in each other's arms
like you're in a fucking movie. It's disgusting. Do you just hug each
other in your free time? Is that it?" Martina teases, evidently pleased
with the way I was almost literally frozen in place.
"She's hot, though. Kudos, I guess." She adds nonchalantly.
I really wish, more than anything, for the ground to open up and take
me.
"She was going through something!" I try to defend, but my
expression seemingly betrayed me when Martina only sco s at my
words.
"Aren't we all?"
"Don't make it weird. We're... friends? I think?" The confusion seeps
back in, further irritating me as I release a small groan, pulling the
pillow to lay atop my head in frustration.
"What's with the uncertainty? Are all of you like this? I never thought
episode of Gossip Girl or something." Martina mumbles from beside
me.
"I'm not an avenger." My mu led voice creeps past the cushion as the
television promptly clicks to a di erent channel.
"You're fucking one."
"I'm not fucking anything! You know, you've got a dirty mouth for a
kid your age." I nearly toss the pillow o the bed, shaken by her
implications because Wanda and I? Oh please, that's impossible.
Right?
"Pipe down, mom.I'm just teasing, you're red as a tomato. So you do
like her?" Martina looks to me, eyebrows wiggling devilishly as I roll
my eyes.
"I don't like her. I almost killed her, several times!"
"All is fair in love and war, or whatever cheesy bullshit they say."
Martina waves me o.
"Plus, the tension is like," She opens her arms, signalling a huge
"This much."
"It's moments like these that I really wish I had the luxury of dying. I
would have put a bullet in my mouth just hearing you talk." I toss to
the other side, turning my back on her as I'm swi ly pushed to the
ground. Well, more accurately, kicked.
I hit the hard, wooden floors with a harsh thud. All the air is knocked
out of my lungs at the sudden impact, only having my elbows to
break the impromptu fall as Martina bursts out laughing. I shoot her a
glare from where I laid and at that moment, I was actually mentally
trying to balance out the consequences of me choking her to death. I
think I could get away with it, I've gotten away with much worse.
"Take a shower, witch lover. You fucking stink, you're making me lose
my appetite." She waves dismissively as I scramble to my feet in
complete and utter disbelief.
"You know I've killed people thrice your size, right?" I seethe.
"Yeah, yeah. Tell it to someone who cares, now shoo. I'm trying to
watch." She beckons and I storm out of the room, begrudgingly
heading to the bathroom NOT because she told me to, but because I
was in dire need for a shower anyway.
What tension was she even talking about? Maybe it was the
awkwardness she was sensing. Yeah, it was definitely that. Wanda
and I are just at a very weird place, neither of us really knew how to
act around each other and I definitely was not sulky because she
wasn't there. I just didn't like being lonely, at least not a er having a
good day.
It's like everything had lost a bunch of meaning, the jokes on TV
weren't as funny, the books were less interesting, the songs less
melodic with no one to share them with. I just didn't like being alone
a er feeling what it was like to have people around who actually care
about you, that's all. It definitely had nothing to do with Wanda.
"Are you having dinner here tonight?" I call out from the kitchen, the
day had passed and night had set and still, Martina was plastered on
the bed surrounded by empty bags of chips.
"Nope!" She replies, her voice bouncing o the walls as I pull out a
box of pasta. As annoying as she is, I kind of liked not being alone for
"I've got plans tonight." She saunters out to the living room, the
patter of her feet drawing near as she leans by the entry of the
kitchen.
"Plans? You sound like you're going out for drinks. You're not even
old enough for an R16 movie."
"My plans are none of your business. At least I'm not a prisoner. See
you in the morning, loser." She walks o with a sarcastic smirk, the
sound of the front door slamming shut thundering through the space
as I continue to work on my dinner.
It must have been the first time in two weeks that I was actually
making myself something that wasn't reheated in the microwave.
Natasha was kind enough to buy literally everything, the pantry was
stocked with spices and other condiments and snacks while the
fridge, unlike how it was when I arrived, was then filled to the brim
with meat and produce. So I landed on the easiest thing I could make
that wasn't complete junk, god knows my body is begging for some
actual nutrition.
So with the plan of letting cooking take over the empty hours of the
night, I threw the pasta into the boiling water and proceeded to
prepare the rest of the ingredients I'd need. I wasn't the best chef, but
I tried my best to cook for myself when I'd be travelling for missions.
It was the only sense of control I ever really had, a sense of
individuality. I was pretty much taking a shot in the dark, lazily
grabbing the things I'd need and thinking as I went along. I ended up
with some ham, some cream, parmesan and basil.
It was actually good.
I put on a record, sat down on the couch with my little bowl before
setting the le overs aside because if there's one thing I know for a
fact I can't do right, it's boiling the right amount of pasta. It's always
too much or too little, never really found the in between. With
another vacant, dri ing night ahead of me, I settled into a book as I
continued to eat what I had made but even then, I couldn't quite set
my attention to the piece of literature on my lap. Martina's words
earlier in the day sure didn't help with my thoughts; it only made
things even more uneasy.
It was like everything had shi ed an inch to the le, nothing was
entirely out of place but nothing felt familiar too. I mean, everything
was completely normal. At least, in my new situation. The music was
playing, the TV was on, there was a tapping noise against the window.
Nothing out of the ordinary.
Except for one thing.
The window thing was definitely not normal. I'd chalk it up to a tree
but I was in new york city, literally high enough for the people below
to look small and there was a continuous thumping sound against
the curtain ridden glass in the living room. I slowly set my bowl down,
shi ing to turn behind me at the source of the disturbance as I
carefully move the curtain to reveal the only possible thing to make
everything more complicated.
"What the hell are you doing here?" Is the first thing that slips out of
my mouth a er l li the window up, watching as a hooded Wanda
looks back at me with a sheepishly nervous smile.
"Hi." She mutters, glancing over my shoulder worriedly.
"Nobody's here- why are you?" I say in a panicked whisper, peeking
my head out to look around her in suspicion because that was
definitely not normal. She stood upon the firescape, wrapped under
layers of clothes and donning the same idea of a disguise she had
before. Which, admittedly, wasn't so great.
"I have to tell you something. Can I come in?" She asks in a low
whisper, taking o her sunglasses as I release a so groan. Why does
the universe hate me?
"Fine." I step aside, extending a hand out for her to take because as
powerful as she is, she did look like she was seconds away from
tumbling inside the apartment and landing on her face.
With her feet finally securely planted on the ground, I shut the
window with my free hand and slide the curtain back to close it,
barely noticing that she was still holding my hand. When our eyes
drop to our intertwined fingers, there's a painfully awkward moment
of us flinching away like we had been burnt.
"You cooked?" She asks, lightly rocking on her heel with her eyes on
my half empty bowl of pasta.
"Yeah. Have you... had dinner? Do you want some?" Every word felt
like jamming a puzzle piece into the wrong hole, it le an
uncomfortable taste in my mouth and honestly, I was hoping she'd
say yes so I could retreat to the kitchen for some time to collect
myself.
"Oh uh- sure."
Thank god.
I bolt out of there as subtly as I could, but it was probably like my life
depended on it. I haven't seen or spoken to her since that day, I know
I could have asked when Natasha would drop in a few calls but it just
felt out of place. Now, she was once again standing in my living room
for some insane reason and now I have to reheat the le over pasta
with shaky hands because for some other insane reason, I was
actually nervous. I wasn't entirely sure which one I liked more, us
hating each other or this weird in between.
"Here, it's probably not that great but I felt like my body was going to
shut down if I made another meal in the microwave." I say as I hand
her the bowl, awkwardly placing myself beside her on the couch.
I was looking at her like a judge holding my dish at a competition,
scanning every inch of her face as she took a bite. When her lips
twitch up into a small smile, I release a breath I didn't even know I
was holding before tearing my eyes away.
"It's good." She hums, nodding along lightly as all the blanketed us
became the so wisp of the music playing from the open bedroom. I
probably should have chosen a less... romantic record.
"Does Nat know you're here?" I ask a er a few, agonizing moments of
silence, glancing at Wanda who silently continued to eat her food.
"No. Nobody does." She says amidst a bite.
"I mean, I'm almost a hundred percent sure it's not for the food so..." I
trail o, watching her in anticipation as she sets her bowl down onto
the co ee table. Conflict washes over her cold features, eyes darting
down to her lap like she was trying to find the words.
"There's an update on Lara."
And just like that, everything changes.
"What?" I manage to push out between my staggered
comprehension, Wanda's face flashing worry as I hesitantly meet her
eyes.
"It happened yesterday and Nat didn't want to say anything yet but I
thought you'd want to know." Wanda so ly explains.
"What happened?" I lightly flinch at my own words, a part of me was
still unsure I wanted to hear the answer— I mean, I knew it'd never be
anything good.
"She was spotted in London. Some of our sources say she's going
a er an auction happening on Saturday." She divulges, but none of
her words spark any clarity.
"An auction? Why would she be at an auction?" I voice my confusion,
trying to piece together as much as I could.
"It's not... a normal kind of auction. They're selling weapons, the
clientele is highly exclusive." Wanda replies, her eyes unfaltering from
mine.
"Weapons? Like..."
"Enough to wipe out a city." She confirms, a disheartening look
looming over her features as I sink into my spot. It sounds exactly like
a job i'd be sent to do and that moment was the only moment it was
really sinking in, the kind of person my sister had turned out to be.
She was exactly like me.
Only the most monstrous parts.
"Saturday, that's exactly a week from now." I breathe out, still
struggling in the shining reality that slowly engulfed me.
"Nat's leading the team, we're all going to be there." Wanda says,
almost apologetically.
"I need to be there."
"How-"
"I need to be there, Wanda." I press, sternly cutting her o as she
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descends into silence at my haste.

at the newfound information.

"Why?"

even there.

and... weird.

herself as well.

"If you want."

disbelief as I sigh.

"Yeah, I can stay."

so, staggered breath.

So I settle for a small smile instead.

she shed onto the couch.

my face, I didn't even need to speak.

there was always some huge obstacle in the way.

"I'll help you." Wanda breaks the silence, turning to look at me.

"Because you have a chance. A real chance. I'd give up anything to have the same." She says, almost in a low whisper as she releases a

"Thank you." I muster out, my eyes glancing down at her hands as I wonder if I should pull her in. It felt like a good moment for a hug—I mean, she looked absolutely pained but I still wasn't sure if we were

"I should probably get going. I just—kind of snuck out. I'll—yeah."

Wanda shi s uncomfortably in place, her cap tipped back enough to shine light on the slight panic in her eyes as she collects the jacket

It felt like a timer going o — the way she takes everything into her hands. She doesn't even go back to her dinner. I'm not really sure what goes over me, maybe it was the fragility of the moment or once again the e ect of the night but with my breathing halted and senses heightened, my hand flies to wrap around her wrist. When she turns to me, I realize I have no idea what to do, or say for the matter. She just looks at me with her cool green eyes and I freeze, like a fucking

"Do you have to go... now" I manage to push out, because spending any more time in silence with my hand around hers felt humiliating

"You can stay for a bit, if you want. I uhm—I don't really mind the company, I guess. If you want." I was stuttering like a flustered kid, tripping over my own words while her eyes go over my face as though

"You want me to stay?" She asks, seemingly directing the question to

"Do you want me to?" She throws the question back, still looming on

"I wouldn't ask if I didn't, Wanda." I shrug lightly, my eyes darting back down to my hand which was still attached to hers as I

awkwardly drop it, retreating my arm back to myself as she hesitantly

I probably should have thought it through. No, I DEFINITELY should have thought it through because the next half hour was spent in severely awkward silence that consisted of Wanda going back to her dinner and me fiddling with everything and anything I could get my hands on. I was starting to regret asking her to stay, it was just that she was kind enough to come and tell me— and with her o ering to help, I felt like it was the least I could do. And maybe, I wanted to

"Do you cook a lot? It was really good." Wanda speaks up, setting her empty bowl back down onto the table as I perk up at her words.

"Lately, no but I used to—back when I was... working. I tried my best to cook for myself wherever I was, it felt like the only thing I could control." I share with a hint of hesitance, leaning back to relax into my

"Working? Like... on missions?" She asks, setting the glass down.

"Yeah. Missions." I nod slightly. It was a better way of phrasing a

"Where have you been?" She asks abruptly, turning to meet my eyes as she finally strips o her cap, lightly running her fingers through her autumn strands as she makes herself a tad bit more comfortable.

"I mean... what countries have you been to? I've only ever been to Sokovia and well— here. I was in Tokyo for a bit with... my brother, but I never got to see much. I always wondered what the rest of the world looked like." She gently reveals, a hopeful, childlike glimmer in

"Well i've been to a lot of places. Most of Europe, a bit of the middle east, Russia, Germany and such." I reply, actively biting back a fond

"Amsterdam and Paris. If I got lucky, I'd get some free time a er a job but it never lasted more than a day or two. I'd spend it roaming the city, trying to see as much as I could and pretending like... I was someone else." I entertain her wonderous remarks, watching as her head lightly tilts as though she was trying to picture it for herself.

"Paris. Is it as beautiful as everyone says?" She conjurs another question, looking genuinely curious as I fully shi my body to face

"Visually, it's kind of underwhelming but that city has so much personality. When you're part of it, you realize the attractions aren't the ones people fall for. It's almost magical." I recount my days in France, having been granted a day to stroll as I scoured the city, every inch, every cafe and restaurant and shop I could find. Everywhere I look, I'd think about how much Lara would have loved to be there.

"What did you do there?" Wanda asks, eyes sparkling with genuine

"Everything. I ate a lot, anything that caught my eye I pursued. I spent the day falling in love with a place that was magical enough to make me forget who I was and I drank the night away." I smile at the light

"Oh yeah.I must have been to at least ten bars, tried every obscurely named drink under the moon and made up a dierent name at every location. At one place I'd be Sarah, the college graduate from Miami and at another i'd be Lauren, the starving artist who sold all of her things to pursue her dream of becoming the next Van Gogh— y'know, without all the ear chopping and such." I hum lightly, a small smile creeping onto my lips as Wanda looks back in genuine amusement.

"It was. It felt free, like for a moment I could be anything I wanted." I nod, opting to grab the pillow by my folded legs and set it upon my lap. I look to Wanda, who was glowing with longing wonder as I open

"Who would you be, if for the night you had the freedom to choose?"

"Oh come on, you could be anyone— anything. There's no wrong answer. Here, I'll start." I straighten my posture, putting on a cordial

"That must have been amazing." She dreamily replies.

"I don't know." She shakes her head, but I don't buy it.

smile as I extend my hand out to Wanda— who looks on in

"Hi, my name is Adriana Smith. I actually just moved here from

"This is dumb." She mumbles against her palm, actively stifling a

"What is? I was just asking for your name, stranger." I smile brightly as she drops her hands, face tainted a light shade of red as she releases

"Uhm... Liz. My name's Liz." She gives in, finally slipping her hand into

"Chase. Liz Chase. I uhm— am an actress." Wanda finally concludes,

"An actress? Have I seen you in anything?" I continue the charade, both of us unable to wipe the smiles o of our faces as she visibly becomes more comfortably in the little game I conjured up.

"Probably not. I'm just starting out. Doing little roles here and there, mostly sitcoms." Wanda flawlessly replies, taking me by surprise.

"So, Liz, what's family like? Got any siblings?" I ask, watching as she

"A few. I have... three sisters and... two brothers! How about you, Adriana Smith?" She fights o a small chuckle as she says my fake name, hiding her smile behind a glass of water as she takes another

"I have an older brother and a younger sister. I'm a middle child, it's probably why I want to be singer. I love the attention and applause." I

"You're very honest, I like it. Are you working on anything right now?" Wanda asks, her nose scrunched in amusement I shoot her a quick

"I'm recording my debut album. You see, I got my heart broken a little

"Heart wrenching?" Wanda reiterates, stifling a laugh as I nod, my lips

"Absolutely soul crushing. Just— entirely cynical. It'll probably make you want to hop o a roof with how depressing it is." I say with utmost passion and Wanda absolutely loses it. She bursts out

laughing at my little performance, nearly doubling over as I fall into a

"Tell me the name of at least one song! Please!" Wanda exclaims amidst her laughter, looking back at me as her then messy autumn

"Please, just one! I'm a fan!" She says dramatically, her hands flying

"Oh, if I must. The first single is going to be called Cheryl, Please Call
Me Back I Miss You' And with this, both of us nearly die of laughter.
The music falls beneath all of our ruckus, with Wanda having to take time to catch her breath as I hide my face in the pillow upon my lap.

"Oh my god. That's the stupidest title i've ever heard. Who's Cheryl?" Wanda exclaims as her laughter begins to die down into a beaming,

"I don't know! It was the first name I thought of!" I defend, tossing the pillow in her direction and hitting her square in the face.

"You are an asshole Adriana, i'm no longer a fan." She throws the

"I apologize. I could sign your forehead for you?" I o er jokingly, making a writing motion with my hand as Wanda rolls her eyes.

"Are you sure? Because i'm pretty sure I have like— a thing

somewhere here... aha!" I exclaim, my eyes landing on a pen sitting in a small mug by a stack of books on the shelf as I promptly rise to my

"Oh don't even think about it!" Wanda warns, already scooting away until her back reaches the far end of the couch as I approach slowly,

"I swear, it'll be worth millions." I take a step closer, watching her summon the pillow with her crimson magic, catching it in her hands

"Go away!" Her mu led voice rings through, but I was hell bent on pestering her even more. Without thinking much of it, I hop onto her lap, my knees landing on opposite sides of her thighs as I try to pry

"You're so annoying!" She grumbles amidst the struggle, I eventually overpower her as I send the cushion flying to the other end of the room— promptly hitting a stack of vinyls that end up crashing to the

"Just my initials, come on!" Her hands find my wrists, keeping me at

bay amidst our little bursts of laughter mixing within the air.

And I swear I didn't mean it—but I glance down at her lips.

crawl o of her and set the pen down upon the desk.

"Sorry—I was—i'm just going to..." I snap, shi ing uncomfortably to

"It's okay— I slipped." She says so ly, a sheepish smile on her lips as

I immediately head to the pile of vinyls on the ground, busying myself by picking them up one by one and using it as some sort of excuse to hide the way my cheeks were strangely heating up. I wanted to crawl into a hole and hide until the feeling goes away, because it's weird and awkward and it makes me want to curl up in a puddle of

But Wanda comes to help, picking up the rest of the records as we set them back on the shelf. She takes the pillow, the one laying on the ground and tosses it back to the couch with ease, leaving us standing there nearly frozen and looking like we were tiptoeing on eggshells.

"I'll set the bowl in the sink." Wanda was first to break the silence, promptly picking up our bowls and darting to the kitchen before I

We were having a really good time, as surprising as that was. I never, in a million years thought that the first time i'd genuinely laugh again was with Wanda Maximo, of all people. That moment on the couch, as shallow and mundane as it may have been, was something i'd

See, when you live life in bleak melancholy—every stroke, every splatter of light and colour stands out like a puddle of sunlight seeping into the darkness. It doesn't matter how small or how

fleeting it is, when it stands amidst years of pain and torturous events that leave a dent in your heart, moments of pure, untainted joy are as

As much as confusion existed in the realm of our space, the one thing I couldn't deny was that I was happy. Sitting there in our own little bubble of make believe, would have been the happiest i'd ever found myself in years. I know I couldn't speak on her behalf, but something told me in the way her eyes sparkled amidst the dim ceiling light that

"I washed them." She comes back a er a few minutes, gently treading back to the couch to collect her belongings as I stood at the exact

"I should really get going, it's getting late." She smiles, and it doesn't look restricted and pulled— the Wanda that stood before me shone

And even if I didn't know exactly how to feel about it, even when I'd still spiral into a loss for words and scrambled thoughts every time she was close enough to touch—I knew that I didn't mind. I didn't mind that she was there, I didn't mind that she laughed at my jokes and that her smile reached her eyes in a way that scrunches her nose like a little kid. I didn't mind that she showed up outside my window in a ridiculous attempt at a disguise just to tell me about Lara because she knew how much it meant— and I didn't mind that she

Because right in that room, the girl looking back at me wasn't the one who le and forgot. She wasn't the one who le chaos in her path, she wasn't the one that looked me dead in the eye and only chose to see a monster. She was the girl, holed up in that little cell, the girl who made things move with her mind, the girl who was dealt a shitty hand— almost shittier than mine. Right there in that room, she preceded every tainted memory, every loss and heartbreak and hurt. Right there, she was just a girl who was trying to do the right thing, even if it meant sneaking into the hideout of a fugitive just to

"I had a really nice time." I finally speak up, right as she's tucking her hair back under her cap and hooded jacket. Her movements still for a

And it happens again, like a clock ticking down that sends me into a spontaneous fit of word vomit that i'd probably end up regretting out of pure shame or anxiety. It slips out before I could even catch it, tumbling past my filters and fingertips and into the cold night air.

"So come back." She stops in her tracks, looking to me like she was trying to make sure she wasn't hearing things. That I actually said it

"What?" A hand on the window latch, her eyes scream of hope and

"Come back... If you want." I sheepishly add, my heart hammering

"We have a week until all hell breaks loose and I'll be here until then,

Her eyes were going over every inch of my face, picking me apart like she was trying to understand if I actually meant it. In the agonizing silence of waiting to see if I had just royally fucked up, she clicks the window open without ever breaking eye contact. Then she smiles.

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against my chest like it was hell bent on breaking through.

just here So come back... if you'd like." I stammer.

She smiles and I breathe for the first time in minutes.

"I'll see you tomorrow then."

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almost completely, like I could see her in her entirety.

held me, up in that roo op just a few nights ago.

I don't know what it meant, but I didn't mind.

eat her pasta and play the dumbest little games.

split second, almost as if she didn't expect me to say it.

And I don't think she's ever felt more real.

"I did too."

uncertainty.

So do mine.

remember for as long as time would let me.

valuable as gold— or maybe even more.

somehow, in some way, she was happy too.

same spot she le me.

Then her grip slips and I stumble forward. My hands flying to the armrest just to break my fall and It would have been fine— It would have just been all fun and games until I realize just how close we actually are. With both my hands on either side of her head, her body extended right beneath me, realization simultaneously sets in both of us. She was close enough that I could feel her breath hitting my lips, staggered and restricted as her eyes stay on mine, looking just as

pillow back my way, but I catch it with ease.

while back so this album—heart wrenching." I state.

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Chicago, y'know— chasing the dream and all that. I'm a singer. What's your name?" I ask as casually as I could, watching as Wanda breaks out into a cheek eating grin, burying her face in her hands as I keep

her, moving back enough to hit the couch's armrest.

"What was your favorite? Do you have one?" She asks.

she couldn't believe I was actually saying what I was saying.

"I—" She stammers, seeming just as lost as I am.

If i'm honest, I can't believe it too.

reclaims her spot right beside me.

understand where we stood.

spot as she takes a drink of water.

killing spree, I suppose.

"What do you mean?"

smile at how invested she looked.

wonder as I hum in thought.

"You drank?" Wanda smiles.

my mouth to speak;

amusement.

mine extended.

giggle as I remain in character.

a small groan amidst her smirk.

pulling away from our handshake.

mine with a gentle shake.

"Liz..." I trail o playfully.

sends me a casual nod.

say with feigned confidence.

pursed in determination.

pit of laughter myself.

strands frame her face.

"I can't! It's a secret!"

amused smile.

"No, I think i'm good."

feet to retrieve it.

the pen already in my tight grip.

the pillow away from her face.

floor in a loud, messy thud.

panicked as I was.

And I catch her do the same.

she composes herself.

confusion and uncertainty.

could even protest.

and burying her face against the cushion.

to her chest as I wave o her flattery.

sip.

nod.

memory, it was one of the better days.

her eyes.

"I'll help you. We can figure it out." She reiterates gently.

painting a picture i've seen before in my head.

"If you show yourself, this is over. You'll be just as hunted as Lara is, maybe even worse." Wanda warns with pained hesitance, her words

"All i've done has led to this, saving her is my only priority. If i'm not there, then all of this— it's all for nothing." I reason, probably coming o harsher than I had intended but my emotions were on a whirlwind

"There's no changing your mind, is there?" She knew by the look on

Wanda only nodded slightly, as though she had accepted that it were out of her hands as we settle into a troubled silence. Everything had only been replaced with dread, with worry as my mind spiraled into a chaotic run of every possible thing I could do to get there. I wasn't exactly great in the financial department and getting to London didn't just take a plan, it took money too. Every possible path I find,

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