15 I felt like a maniac pacing around the living room with my fingertips embedded between my teeth and the elephant sized question of where the hell Martina could be because she had le over three hours prior and the sun was setting and every possible scenario was playing out in my head. I couldn't even appreciate the snow that came while she was gone because my mind was wrecked with worry. It was definitely ugly, even going as far as to thinking how I'd explain to Natasha that I lost the kid because I let her go out to buy board games. Natasha would kill me— no, actually, she'd probably give me that sulky, disappointed look and that would kill me, it definitely would. It would kill me with more agony than any word, any bullet or blade that could ever break skin. So of course, when the front door clicks open and Martina walks in, her lower lip trembling with snowflakes in her brown hair as she practically waddles to the co ee table, dumping out every bag she brought with her, I feel relief wash over me unlike any other. It was concerning how the items she had amounted to a pile that was probably even taller than her. "Where the hell have you been?" Is the first thing that slips out of my mouth as Martina runs to the kitchen, ignoring my worried exclamations. "Hey!" I call out, following her with a stomp to find her pouring herself a hot cup of co ee—like any normal thirteen year old would. "I—I'm freezing. Wait." She says through gritted teeth, bringing the cup to her lips and visibly so ening into relief the moment the hot liquid enters her system. "What took you so long?" I question incredulously, watching as she saunters past me once again with zero regard to my worries. "The game store thingy— the one two blocks down was closed so I had to run around for it. Plus, I got beer." She beams, setting her cup down as she practically rips the paper bags open. "Beer? Why the fuck would you— how did you even get that?" The questions pile up, tripping over each other as they slip from my lips. "I gave a guy ten bucks to buy it for me. Thank god morals are overrated, he ate that shit up with no hesitation." She cackles, tossing the discarded paper in the bin by the corner as she pulled out several boxes and laid them out onto the table. She must have gotten every board game she could find because what stared back at me looked more like the beginnings of us starting our own board game shop than actually hosting a game night. She went all out with it, she even got bingo and here I was thinking that was only for the elderly. She also pulls out a six pack can of Bud Light because apparently we're also hosting a party filled with a bunch of middle aged men. "Bud light? Seriously?" "Do I look like I know this shit? I just gave him the money and told him to get me beer. This is what he brought." She defends, plopping down onto the couch as I hastily grab the pack, heading to the kitchen to shove it into the fridge. "So what do we do now?" I call out, feeling slightly overwhelmed at the set up before me. "I don't know? Wait for her to get here? We can all have dinner together then do the games. Just don't be weird about it." Martina replies from the couch, lounging with another open bag of chips rested upon her lap. "Why would I be weird about it? How is that even possible?" I sco at her remark, masking the way I was totally freaked out about everything that I felt like my heart was going to drop through my ass. "Oh trust me, you can be weird about things. Just make it as natural as possible." She waves o as I take the spot next to her, sinking into my seat with the crushing burden of worry that I would fuck up the night. The entire time waiting was a completely agonizing experience. It was like my heart was trying to rip through my chest with how fast it was beating—I felt restless and uneasy and I took a shower that must have lasted at least an hour in which I only stood under the stream staring at the tiled wall. Martina had to bang against the door just to make sure I was still breathing and sure enough, if she didn't do that I probably would have forgotten to breathe too. a I couldn't quite understand why I was so on edge. It wasn't like I was going to ask her to move in or something even remotely close to anything romantic. It was just game night, we'd all play a little, drink a little and talk a little because that's what normal people do. That's what I imagine people who have a stable home and social life do because it's definitely not what I or any of the people I associate with do. But god, I don't even know how to play monopoly. Martina gave me a quick run through on every game, which seemed simple enough. It wasn't rocket science even though a part of me did regret spending most of my pre espionage days cooped up at home drawing flowers and making boxed pasta. I probably should have made actual friends, maybe then I wouldn't be so socially inept. "So it's a game... about aging?" I question slowly, uncertainty still swept across my face as Martina nods. "Kind of. It's about life, that's literally the title." She sighs, cooped up into the corner of the couch with a can of soda and some peanuts. Sometimes I wonder if i'm living with a thirteen year old or a middle aged man going through a crisis. All that's missing was a cigarette and beer cans. "So how do you win?" "You retire. Whoever makes the most money wins." She replies with a shrug. "That doesn't sound fun at all. Isn't the point of games to have fun and escape for a little? Why would they make a game with... debt and investments and all of that. It makes no sense." I fall back onto the couch, my legs curled up for us to fit as I laid with my head against the armrest, staring up at the ceiling with a defeated sigh. "Just trust me, it's going to be great. It's my first time third wheeling on a date and i'm already confident." Martina beams, her words shooting me up and out of my spot instantly. "Date? It's not a date." I quickly defend. "Then why does she keep coming over late at night? What is this, a fucking book club?" Martina fires back, eyebrows raised and eyes expectant. a "We just hang out. It's no big deal. It's not a date—that's so weird. Don't be weird." The word vomit returns, my thoughts jumbling into a scrambled mess as I cross my arms over my chest. "Yeah and i'mthe one being weird." She snorts, stifling a laugh that immediately dies down when a resounding knock bleeds through the window. Martina and I shoot each other a look, hers leaning towards the side of excitement while mine resembles... pained constipation. In one swi motion she jumps to arrange the games, tidying up as much as she could while I straightened my outfit— which only really consisted of a sweater and some joggers because it's cold and I was starting to overthink everything. This never would have happened if Martina didn't make such a fuss about it, now i'm even more confused than when we started. a "Open it." She whisper yells, motioning for me to go to the window as panic sets in. Okay, I just have to remember to be calm and not be weird. That doesn't sound so hard. I head to the space behind the couch, pulling the curtains apart and li ing the window with ease only to come face to face with Wanda, who stood before me in a pu y jacket, rubbing her hands together as flakes of snow pepper her clothing. She was sporting a beanie and some gloves that looked a little too big on her and her cheeks were almost as flush as her autumn hair. I could see every breath as she smiled back at me, doing a little wave as my ability to speak vanishes in thin air. Suddenly, being casual began to be the hardest thing in the world. "Good evening." Is what i'm finally able to muster out, frozen in place as I will myself to plaster on a smile. "Oh my god." I hear Martina groan from behind me, her judgement only sinking me deeper into place as Wanda releases a small laugh that traces in the cold night air. "Good evening, can I come in?" Wanda asks amidst an amused chuckle, motioning to the room behind me as I snap back into reality and step aside, nearly tripping over myself in the process but quickly recovering. Wanda soon climbs in, her footing was firm and familiar unlike the first time she snuck inside. When she finds solid ground, she dusts the snow o of her shoulders and almost freezes when she spots Martina, who stood by the doorway to the kitchen with a knowing smirk that made me wish invisibility was one of my abilities. Wanda snaps to me in surprise, panic brewing in her eyes at Martina's presence. "Oh— she knows. It's okay." I dismiss, watching relief flood over her features as Martina approaches. "Nice to see my favorite witch again." Martina greets, going straight in for a hug that a delightfully surprised Wanda accepts without esitation. Martina sends me a challenging gaze over wanda's shoulder as I mouth for her to ' fuck o '. "I'm the only one you know." Wanda laughs so ly, pulling away but keeping Martina at arm's length. Her eyes immediately go to the evident bruises and cuts, brows twitching into a worried furrow as her cool green eyes scan over Martina's face. "What happened? Who did this?" A bit of her accent shines through with her tone, sounding chillingly ominous as she looks back at me almost as though she was asking me to explain. "It's... a long story." I surrender, motioning for her to look at Martina as I settle upon the couch. "What happened?" Wanda turns to her, tone so ening into one of pure concern as she plays it o like she always does, putting on a bright smile and plopping down onto the other end of the couch. "Got into a bit of a throw down with some kids around the block. You should see the other guy." Martina chuckles, hands once again finding a snack she le laying around the table as Wanda uncertainly takes the spot in between us. "Are you sure? You're okay?" Wanda gently asks, her voice bleeding of tenderness that makes my heart swell in its place. Yeah, that's totally notweird. "I'm fantastic. Enough about me, Lexa told me all about your little bucket list." Martina starts excitedly. Wanda gives me a knowing glance, a ghost of a smile prancing upon her lips as she begins to strip o her jacket and gloves, laying it over the spine of the couch. "She did?" Wanda hums in amusement. "Well she had no choice—but that's not the point. I want to formally welcome you to game night." Martina presents, motioning to the stack of board games sitting upon the co ee table. Wanda's curious eyes trace over them, a small smile tugging at her lips as she goes over every single one. She touches it with such delicacy, like a child doused in awe and wonder while she li s each box ever so slightly with her pale, ringed fingers because of course, even under the gloves she'd still wear her rings. I had to remind myself to rip my gaze away every few moments, to not spiral down my own trail of awe at her features, at the way she squints her eyes slightly when she focuses or the way her lips subtly move when she reads. "You know any of these?" Martina asks, hunched over and rummaging through the stack of games as Wanda hums. "Some, yes." She replies lightly as Martina pulls out the box of Scrabble, separating it from the stack and waving it around with a "Ready to lose?" She says to Wanda and I, smile beaming through her wounded lips as we exchange a quick look. "Never." Wanda and I say simultaneously. One thing I never truly disclosed before diving into game night— was that I was severely competitive. Well, to be quite honest it may have slipped my mind a little. It's been years since I've played a game and the last of it was at a family gathering where I was part of a game called trip to Jerusalem which basically is just musical chairs. That night, like many others, ended up in disaster when I found myself on the ground playing tug of war over the last chair and not taking into account that I was slightly stronger than normal people Long story short, I sent my cousin flying over to the drinks table and while Lara nearly died laughing—everyone else had the shock of their lives. Something similar occured that night, like some sort of sudden awakening when I found myself on the losing end—with Martina, of all people, winning. She was thirteen years old and beating me in Scrabble and somehow, that was something I couldn't live with. "That's not a word!" I exclaim for the third time that night, my frustration bleeding out for everyone to see. "Yes it is, dipshit!" She fires back, equally irritated at my protests. "Curmudgeon? You're making it up!" I groan, falling back into my seat as my hands travel to my temple, rubbing harshly to ease the massive headache I was getting at the argument while Wanda stifles a laugh the entire time. a "It's not my fault you're illiterate!" "At least i'm not a liar!" "Wanda!" We both turn to her at the same time, each of us heated while Wanda pulls out her phone for the fourth time that night. "It's a word. It means bad tempered, which is kind of fitting for the two of you." She confirms a er a few moments of tapping away, further ensuing Martina's onslaught of mocking taunts as I hastily rise to my feet, stomping to the kitchen with a scowl plastered on my lips. "Where are you going?" Martina calls out, stopping me in my tracks at the kitchen entrance. "To get a drink!" I hu, continuing inside and swinging the fridge door open a little too harshly because i'm pretty sure I heard some screws go loose with the force. I take a beer out of the pack, flicking the lid open with ease and bringing it to my lips. The cool liquid traces down my throat, instantly dousing the frustration that came with accepting my loss as I lightly kick the fridge door shut. "Can I have one?" Wanda's voice rings through the space, taking me by surprise as I turn to find her standing by the doorway with a small smile. "Oh— yeah, of course." I set the bottle down, moving to grab her a beer as she walks in, swi ly hopping up onto the counter behind me. "I'm sorry about this." I sigh, handing her a bottle that she quickly pops open with her magic. "About what?" She hums, slightly tilting her head before bringing the drink to her lips and taking a sip. I settle against the edge of the counter across her, the bottle loosely hanging from my grip as I release a so sigh. "It was supposed to be fun and now i'm literally another ridiculous word away from strangling somebody." I chuckly dryly, shaking my head as Wanda slowly nods. "Who said it wasn't fun?" She smiles, liquor glossed lips glimmering under the ceiling lamp as my fingers trace over the rim of the bottle, eyes glued to the ground as I tried to bite back a grin. "You enjoy the bickering?" I ask, li ing my head to look at her. "It reminds me of home. Pietro and I used to be a lot worse. He wasn't as fast when we were younger but he was still pretty good and he'd run circles around me— teasing me, mocking me, landing a bunch of flicks before I could even see him. It was crazy." She shares amidst a small chuckle, the bittersweet sparkle in her eyes swimming beneath her words. "So this is okay? Small?" I hum, raising a brow as she nods. "It's perfect." "Hey when Lexa's done being a sissy can you tell her we're playing Pictionary next? Oh, and bring me back some Cheetos." Martina calls out from the living room, completely shattering the moment in the most casually comedic way possible that leaves Wanda and I nearly turning red trying to stifle our laughter. "I have to deal with this every day." I hu as Wanda hops o of the counter, trailing closely behind as we make our way out. "I think it's adorable." She whispers the exact moment we step into the living room, leaving me a tomato colored mess as she reclaims her spot with such nonchalance. "Where are my Cheetos?" Martina complains once she spots me empty handed, settling back into my seat with a groan. "Get them yourself. How can you eat so muchjunk and not be like morbidly obese? I've never even seen you drink water in the past three weeks." I say, sinking back onto the couch as Martina gets up in irritation. "It's called metabolism, grandma." She sarcastically smiles, heading right for the kitchen and leaving Wanda and I alone once more. "Can I ask you something?" Wanda hums, turning to me as she lightly taps her ring against the glass of her bottle. "Yeah, sure." "Did something... happen? With Nat?" She carefully trails, uncertain eyes looking to me as I stammer for a coherent answer. "What do you mean?" I promptly return her uncertainty, hiding my face behind a huge gulp of my drink as I tried to wash away the nerves building in my chest. "I knew she was visiting but when she arrived back at the compound she seemed really... upset? I don't know but she was di erent— her and Steve even got into a fight over dinner." Wanda shares with a glimmer of worry behind her green eyes, brows furrowed into conflict as I'm taken by surprise. "A fight? Over what?" I couldn't help the shock in my tone as wonderous curiosity sweeps every inch of me. Steve and Natasha fighting was a visual that was hard to bring to life, since they were the two most composed people on the team a er all. Just like that, the sinking feeling was back in my gut, clawing, screaming at my bones that something was entirely wrong. "I wasn't sure but it got bad. It was practically a screaming match." Wanda sighs, taking a sip of her own drink right as Martina walks back in with a handful of snacks she lays out onto the table. "So who's ready to get their ass beat again?" Safe to say, I lost every single game that night. It was an ugly sight indeed when a scowl had found a semipermanent home on my lips. Martina won most of them, which she took no time in parading around—mostly to rub it in my face while Wanda basks in the amusement of our back and forth. Pictionary was the worst one, even Wanda got a taste of the bickering when she went a whole ten rounds guessing everything right. "You're reading her mind!" I accuse in exclamation, nearly jumping out of my seat as Wanda instantly bursts into defensive protest. "I'm not! You're just slow!" She fires back in o ense, in which Martina immediately backs her up. "You are pretty slow." Martina nods. "You two are unbelievable!" I storm o, heading to grab another drink that I wish would have been a little stronger to douse the flames of my irritation. Around an hour past midnight, a er countless cans of soda and snacks, Martina dramatically announced her retirement to bed by tossing pillows at my head to remind me that I was most definitely going to find new residence on the couch. She did have enough decency to move the record player out to the living room, along with the handful of vinyls I like to play on repeat. When all was said and done, the echo of her bedroom door slamming shut would be the only thing to accompany Wanda and I amidst the space, both of us on our third bottle of beer and her, giggling at the most mundane things. "You don't do well with losing, don't you?" Wanda nudges, green eyes sparkling with amusement. "I don't like it! She's a kid! I feel like a loser." I groan, hanging my head back as frustration floods my system. "You're too competitive." "You're too judgy." "Am not." "You are!" I laugh, watching as she grimaces at the thought, folding her arms over her chest as she shook her head in protest. "I'm not judgy." She states amidst a pointed glare. "You are! You just do it silently." I counter, a playful smile plastered on my lips as Wanda waves me o . "Everyone's judgy. It's called intuition—like when you meet someone for the first time and you get a feeling." She explains, finishing the last of her drink and setting it down upon the co ee table. We were on opposite ends of the couch, both our legs stretched out over the length of the seat, nearly intertwining as she hugs a pillow to her chest. Her autumn hair was now bundled up into a loose bun, her shoes scattered on the floor leaving her in her plain black socks that pressed against the side of my thigh. I had a clear view of her under the dim ceiling light, the ghost of an alcohol fuelled blush on her pale cheeks and her liquor glossed lips. I was nowhere near drunk, but I felt the same buzz travel beneath my skin either way every time her eyes linger on me. "What was your feeling?" I ask, mimicking her position and hugging a pillow to my own chest. "With what?" She questions, playing with her rings once again as her head tilts ever so slightly in curiosity. "With me. When we first met, if you could even call talking through a vent a meeting." I bring up with a so, airy hu. "Technically, the first time I saw you was when you interrupted my session. I tried to get into your head that day but I couldn't." She shares, her bottom lip rolling in slightly as she hums in thought, the gears behind her eyes turning as the corners of her lips tug into a "I thought you were... crazy." She smiles, looking back at me as my brows li at her revelation. "Crazy?" I reiterate amidst a breathy chuckle. "Well, it's not every day somebody barges in saying you're going to die." She quips in amusement. "Okay, I can explain that. Every single volunteer they took away never came back, it wasn't exactly the most hospitable facility so I thought they were dead and I saw them dragging you down the hall and I guess—I assumed you'd die too." My fingers find the hem of the pillow case, fiddling through the little ru les as I spoke. "You didn't even know me." She says so ly, almost curiously as she stirs the rings on her fingers, li ing them up and settling them back down at the base. "I didn't need to. I told you, I liked your song and you just... looked empty, more than the ones I've seen. Maybe it was selfish but I wanted to know you." I take a jab at honesty, wondering if maybe the alcohol had more e ect on me than I let on. "It's not selfish." She says, almost in a whisper. "It's not?" I hum and she shakes her head, biting back a smile. "In the strangest way, it felt like someone cared. It's long overdue, but thank you. For caring." She says, sincerity seeping past every word that fell from her lips. Silence fell upon us a er that, my conversation with Martina from earlier had flooded my mind— making it harder to breathe. The truth never had a problem being buried in my chest, but somehow— when she was looking back at me on that couch, looking as real as the way she held me in her arms at Tony's party, every secret, every demon i've hidden behind the shadows began to claw at my insides. I couldn't understand the vulnerability her presence seemed to pull out of me, but the terrifying part is that it wasn't. It wasn't at all, not the way it used to be. "I can't breathe." The words slip o my tongue before I could fight, sparking confusion in Wanda's eyes as she freezes in place. "What?" "I can't breathe. I— I have to go." The heaving begins and before she could say another word, i'm on my feet and bolting out the door. I know where I'm going, even when it didn't feel real my steps launched me with the conviction of my pained breaths until I reach the rusted door. I burst through, the cold night air hitting my skin as flakes of snow fell upon me, covering the roo op ground and lightly crunching under my every step. I wanted to tell her everything, to tear myself open and lay it all out even when my head was screaming at me to stop. I approach the edge once again, my breaths visible before me as I look down at the busy street. The creak of the door rings through a er a while, careful footsteps drawing near until I feel her settle beside me, forearms settled on the snow covered ledge as I kept my eyes on the scene below, fearing that if I looked back at her— I wouldn't be able to stop myself. I'd drown in the confusion, in the helplessness that itched for me to go, to run, to slip back into the darkness i've called home for the longest time. Why do you keep running?" She breathes a er a while, not a single trace of malice or hostility—only sincere curiosity. "I don't know how to answer that." I whisper, my eyes tracing over every car, every pedestrian, every glowing shop light that spilled onto the sidewalk. "I scare you." She states more than asks, her words snapping my attention right at her only to find melancholy painted onto her features. She's looking down too, the city lights gleaming upon her pale skin as my eyes trace over every inch. "Get out of my head." I whisper. "I thought we were past that." She replies flatly, meeting my eyes. "Are we?" At my response, her brows twitch into a slight furrow, disappointment washing over her gaze as she tears it away, turning to look ahead. The silence was heavy, crushing us in place despite the sound of the city bleeding through. We were back in a bubble, the despair in her face so painfully evident as she fiddles with her rings. Confusion is a hard emotion to handle, it's foreign, unstable, terrifying and it's all that swallows me when she's around. I couldn't understand the way my defenses fall with a single look, a single word, a single smile and I wasn't sure I wanted to— if understanding meant hopping back into the feeling of not being alone, the feeling that came with the risk of being torn from my grasp the way it always was. "I should go." She says, putting on a small smile that hardly looks real as she backs away, shoving her hands into the pocket of her jeans before turning on her heel and heading to the door. My ears were ringing, my thoughts scattering into a million pieces I couldn't gather without drawing blood. Every echo of her fading footsteps taunted me with the voices of every mistake I had ever made, tearing, scratching at my chest until she reaches for the handle of the door. "I had a choice." I say above the city noise, stopping her in her tracks as the bitter a ertaste of my words engulf every inch of me. "I had a choice." I reiterate almost desperately, watching as she turned around to look back at me. "What?" "When I le — I had a choice. I came back to HYDRA because I chose to." The moment I say it, loud enough to hit her ears and my own, shame blankets me instantly. Wanda's face was unreadable, her grip slipping from the handle and falling back to her side. "I tried to find you, I tried to find my family and when I couldn't I came back. Everything i've done for the past two years, I did it by choice." It was like a waterfall filled with the fragments of all i've tried to bury, slipping past my tongue with all the blood i've spilled and smeared. "Every single person I hurt, every life i've taken— was by choice. I was mad at a world that le me behind, Wanda. I thought that by causing all this pain that somehow, it would take away mine." It keeps going, every word tearing deeper than the last. "And yes, i'm scared of you. Terrified, i've always been." I confirm, watching as her face fell as though I had shot a bullet through her chest. "Because honesty— isn't terrifying with you. I'm telling you everything I promised myself to never speak of and i'm not afraid and that—that terrifies me." I finish in a ramble, stammered breaths painting the cold air in a thin cloud that dissipates before it could even exist. Without another word, she walks towards me, her steps ringing through the air with rushed conviction as I brace myself for whatever came next. I couldn't read her expression, I couldn't gouge what she was going to do— if she was going to fling me across the street or land a hit, every muscle in my body tenses as she gets closer until her hands find the fabric of my shirt, pulling me against her into an embrace that takes me by surprise. Her arms slip around my torso as I stood frozen, still as a rock and holding my breath as she presses her cheek against the top of my shoulders. "I'm not the person you and Nat deserve to fight for." I whisper, my arms going limp by my side as she keeps her grip, holding me so close that I could feel every breath she took. a "No, you're more." She says so ly, mu led against the fabric of my shirt as a spew of memories come flooding back. Everything and more, Lexa Kovacs. I remember Estelle's words, looming in my ear with the ghost of the past. I remember the way it made me feel, the rush, the adrenaline, the fleeting moment of invincibility that flooded my veins but I also remember crashing, the despair, the constant chase of trying to live up to the words of a masked stranger who never cared enough to sink her fingers past the surface. Then here I am and here she is, Wanda Maximo telling me almost the exact same thing but bringing to light nothing of the emotions i've tied to such a phrase. Right here, with me in her arms I feel nothing of the chase, of the reckless, inevitable crash that comes with fleeting words and empty tricks, I feel nothing of the rush, of the adrenaline that only tears me with pleasure that leaves me a shell when the sun rises. All at once, I realize exactly what it meant. It was like finally finding a clearing a er wandering tall trees for centuries, like fog disappearing and rays seeping through sheer curtains with the promise of possibility and hope. I understood what it was supposed to mean, what it was supposed to feel like, that the rush could never compare to the serenity and comfort I found in a single moment, with a woman I once resented clinging onto me like nothing else in the world could ever exist outside of our arms. She held me with the same tenderness she reserved for the way she sorted through books and records, for the way she held Martina, for the way she traced over The Picture of Dorian Gray in the bedroom just a night prior. The same tenderness and haste as though if she loosened her grip in even a fraction of a second, I'd slip through and

spiral out of her reach.

desperately try to blink away.

hip and raised brows.

me.

So I melted into her, I let my arms travel up her back, wrapping around her shoulders with a hand nuzzled to cradle the back of her head. Her autumn hair engulfed my fingers beneath her dark grey beanie, every breath, every moment fading into the gentleness of us. She said a million things without a word ever leaving her lips and for some reason, my vision blurs with the tears of exhaustion that I

"Really? Again?" Martina's voice shatters the moment, both of us pulling away to snap at her, standing by the door with a hand on her

"Why do I even bother." Martina hu s, shaking her head before walking back out as the sound of the door clicking shut echoes through the air. Wanda and I exchange a look, slow smiles creeping

"I'm never going to hear the end of this." I say amidst a chuckle, a hand on my stomach as Wanda's bright, amused smile beams back at

"Oh if you could only hear what she was thinking." Wanda shakes her head, a smirk still plastered on her lips as we ride the high of our

"It's bad, isn't it?" I question, leading us back over to the ledge as

"I feel sorry for you." She jokes, watching as I hop up without missing

"Are we going to jump this time?" Wanda playfully asks, placing a hand in mine as she gets up onto the ledge and settles her balance

"You do know I can sort of fly, right?" She raises a brow, looking back

"Maybe i'll take you down with me." She fires back as I turn to look beneath us, the height already sparking fascination as I close my eyes

"Maybe i'd let you." I whisper, feeling her hand land on my sternum to

"I'd rather not." She warns, stopping me from inching any closer to

"Your hands are cold." I so ly state, keeping my eyes wired tightly

"It iscold." I could feel her stare burn through the side of my face, my lips twitching up into a small smile as I find her hand, intertwining her

I can feel her tense up under my touch, taking a while until the tips of her fingers move to press up in between my knuckles as I release a deep breath. She's still looking at me and i'm still closing my eyes, her hands in mine as the sound of the bustling city surrounds us.

"You are unbelievable, Wanda Maximo ." I whisper amidst a small

"You are. You surprise me at every turn." I so ly reply, watching as

"I used to hate you, a er that day at the facility." I reveal amidst a ghost of a smile peppered onto my lips. Her eyes are tracing below, the glow of the lights illuminating a part of her face enough for me to see the way the corner of her lips are curved into a small smile.

"Eh, I still kind of hate you." I joke and she pulls her hand away from mine, rolling her eyes as she hops o of the ledge. I turn on my heel, probably too quick for somebody who was literally half an inch from

"I should push you." She challenges, arms crossed over her chest.

"I'll make it easier for you." I take a small step back, the edge of my

"Stop." She warns seriously, but I only spread my arms and put on a

"Why? I can't die, remember." I reply in a so chuckle. Wanda steps forward, but I only inch myself further back— much to her horror.

"I'm serious! Get down." She orders, standing her ground as I still my

The air is knocked out of my lungs as I began to fall, closing my eyes with my arms outstretched as I brace myself for an impact that never comes. All at once, everything stills as I open my eyes to find myself levitating, high above the ground, enough for the pedestrians to overlook but close enough to vividly hear conversations. I can see the crimson energy of Wanda's magic wrapped around my entirety as I float back up to the top. She pulls me closer, setting me down with a thud as my back hits the cement of the roo op floor and she drops

"Are you crazy?" She exclaims, standing over me as I prop myself up

"Why would you do that?" She groans, irritation painted over her

"Because I knew you'd do that." I reply casually, shi ing to get up and

"And what if I didn't? What if I was too late and you hit the ground?" She argues sternly, piercing a gaze right through me as I meet her

"Then I'd get up and walk back inside like nothing happened." I reply

"That's not the point!" She exclaims, throwing her arms up in

"No you're right, the point is you did catch me." I counter, walking over to her and making a move to fix the beanie that was nearly

"You're so annoying." She mutters in a small scowl, standing there as I set her beanie in place and tap the top of her head lightly before

"You don't get it, do you?" I question, shoving my shivering hands into the pockets of my pants as she looks back at me in irritated

Continue reading next part □

a

ď

heel already hanging o as her eyes widen in shock.

movements, finding amusement in her concern.

her hands with an exhausted hu.

features as she looks back at me.

with nonchalance, and it drives her insane.

exasperation and disbelief at my lack of concern.

lopsided amidst the chaos of my little stunt.

"That was me telling you I trust you."

onto my elbows.

dust myself o.

eyes with a smile.

stepping away.

confusion.

"Maybe."

"Unbelievable, Wanda Maximo." I smile and finally step o.

shut as she retreats her grasp with hesitance.

fingers with my own without ever opening my eyes.

smirk, finally opening my eyes to look back at her.

"Am I?" She hums, I nod.

"And now?"

she looks away and smiles to herself.

the edge as I look down at her.

onto our lips as we burst out into laughter.

a beat and extend an hand out for her to take.

laughter down into settlement.

Wanda nods incessantly.

right next to me.

and inch forward.

hold me back.

"Maybe i'll push you." I quip.

at me as I only o er a quick shrug.

"Then it'd be no problem." I hum.