2 I was awake but all at once I wasn't. Have you ever had a dream, a dream where you're stuck behind glass, unable to do anything but watch what plays out in front of you? No matter how hard you scream or kick or try, you can't move. Your body is frozen, hard as stone despite what shatters in your chest. It was just like that, I could feel the bedding pressed onto my back, I was aware of everything. a But I was stuck. My head was spinning, eyes burning and body limp. The lights were so bright that it poured through my eyelids, burning into my brain as the sound of machines circle the air. Everything was loud, so so loud. I wanted to open my eyes, I wanted to get up, to scream—but I was restrained. It was almost as if my body and my consciousness were on two dierent planes and no matter how hard I willed myself to move, nothing would happen. I could feel the leather around my wrists, the clanking of the metal chains against whatever bed I was on. My heart begins to thrash, pounding, begging to tear out. I was back— It was happening again. I couldn't be back— It was impossible. It's supposed to be over. I did everything right. I kept my promises and they betrayed me. They always do. "Why is she tied up?" I hear a voice cut through the beeping machines. It was Natasha. "She's dangerous. We're just following protocol." A female voice replied, one I couldn't recognize. I could practically smell the medication around me, bringing forth a torturous string of memories. "She's just overwhelmed." Natasha argues, I could almost picture her face. Red lips and furrowed brows, her footsteps nearing and merged protests surrounding us. "She tried to kill you." The unfamiliar voice says as I feel the straps around my wrists move, loosen and eventually fall o. "She wasn't trying to kill me." Natasha was right next to my bedside, her voice was so near and crystal. The remnants of my most recent memories come rushing back in a thick, harsh flood. My hand on her neck, her haunting words, all the guns and even the look on Steve's. I used to be vou. "If you need some sort of refresher, she was choking you out." One of them says, not caring enough to mask her irritation. "If she wanted to kill me she would have snapped my neck. This is new, she's scared and treating her like this only makes that worse." Natasha keeps a chilling calmness in her tone, the kind that's subtle enough to strike fear and authority over whoever was on the receiving end. "If you're forgetting, she's enhanced. She's not like you. So do you suggest we let a girl who just killed twenty five armed men in minutes, roam freely? Without supervision?" My heart sinks at the conversation, I wasn't sure which part unsettled me most. The way they so casually speak of me or the way Natasha wasn't missing a beat in trying to defend me. "I'm saying not to treat her like a prisoner. She needs help, not a cage." There was depth to her words that nobody else in the room understood, even I didn't. Everything they were saying was right, I am a danger and I did hurt her but yet, there she stood, right next to me, so adamant on handing me a chance I wasn't even sure I wanted— or deserved. "If I find her in restraints again, you'll all have a problem with me." Natasha warns subsequently walking out and leaving the room in The minutes felt like hours when I finally regained mobility, shooting up as I took my first full gasp of air. Every doctor in the room looked at me, terrified as they clutched their tablets to their chests. I look down at my body on instinct, remembering the times when I used to wake up from all the experiments I'd be put through, I'd find tubes stuck into di erent parts of my body, needles penetrated into my skin as I sat in pain. No tubes or needles, just a fresh change of clothes and the cu s that restrained me minutes before dangling by frame of the bed. "Nice to have you back." Maria pulls my attention, standing by the doorway in an all-black uniform and indierence. It was her, I recognize her voice. She was the one Natasha was talking to. "What did you do to me?" I ask, eyes returning to my bare arms as I tried to find remnants, clues of what my body had been put through. "You were administered a strong sedative. Things got... a little out of hand." Maria explains flatly as I shi to plant my feet on the ground, my knees instantly buckled, feeling the weakest I had ever felt. "You should probably take a minute, it's been a while since you were up on your feet." Maria pushes herself o of the doorframe, heading towards one of the doctors as they handed over what I assumed were records. "A while? How long was I out?" I ask, masking the panic in my tone as Maria opens her mouth to speak without even glancing my way. "Three days." "What?" I exclaim, ba led at her revelation. I was unconscious for three days? "We weren't sure if any sedative would even work on you so we gave you the strongest one. If it were any other person, they'd be out for a week." Maria simply explains, shrugging with nonchalance that strangely irks me. "Are you finished? Can I leave or are you going to sedate me again?" I spew, unable to control the hostility that peeked through my words as Maria settled her eyes on me, an unreadable expression on her face as she shoots me a small nod. "Nat is asking for you. Take the elevator to level 3, le corridor second room to your right." Maria says flatly, almost robotically as I storm I begrudgingly follow her instructions, realizing that even if I did decide to be a spiteful asshole and ignore her words, there was nowhere I could go. I'd probably lose myself again in the endless corridors, so I stepped into the elevators instead. I find the room she was talking about, glass walls lining the halls as I see the entire team sitting around a long, conference table. "Good, you're awake." Natasha was the first to address me as I make my way inside, awkwardly standing by the door. "How are you feeling?" Steve chimes in from right next to Natasha, getting up from his seat as his eyes stay trained on me. "Like I've been asleep for three days." I reply coldly. "You can take a seat." Steve says with a small, tight lipped smile as he motions to the empty spot between Natasha and Sam. I look at the seat, hesitance blanketing my every inch as I finally make my way to the chair. Everyone, as expected, had their eyes on me. Looks filled to the brim with curiosity, anticipation. Well, all except for Wanda who made sure to show no sign of acknowledgement at my presence. a "Is it true you choked Nat?" Sam, to my surprise, leans over in an amused whisper. Natasha instantly sends him a reprimanding glare as he keeps his eyes on me, waiting for a response. "Yes." I say with a so sigh and his face lights up, like he was stifling a laugh. "And you live to tell the tale. Amazing." Sam chuckles, settling back into his seat as Steve clears his throat. My eyes do a quick scan over the others, all of which I had seen before except for one. It looked like a mix between a man and a robot, smooth red skin merged with silver parts and a glowing yellow stone perched right upon his forehead. "What is it?" I lean over to Natasha, who follows my line of sight. "I'm Vision." The... thing replies, seemingly hearing my hushed question as it sends me a cordial smile. a Well, you see something new every day. "As you all know, this is Lexa Kovacs. She'll be with us for a while." Steve begins as a holographic screen appears behind him, one that displayed a picture of my sister. I instantly perk up in place, leaning over as my heart freezes. I haven't seen that picture before. She looks... older. Di erent. "And this is Lara Kovacs. We believe she's being held in another HYDRA facility, somewhere in Northern Germany." Steve continues, the screen flashing an abundance of pictures and further information about a handful of facilities. "Remind me again why we're doing this?" Wanda speaks up, earning everyone's eyes as she only keeps her gaze on Steve. I had to actively bite back a smirk at the repulsion, the anger that swam in her tone. "Wanda." Natasha begins, a so plea for her to settle into silence but Wanda didn't seem to care. My eyes bore into the side of her head, waiting for her to continue, daring her to continue. A er three days of slumber, I wasn't opposed to a little drama. "No— tell me why we're helping her Is it out of the goodness of our hearts? Because if this is an optional mission then I want no part of it." Wanda says with stern dominance, animosity dripping from her lips. She hadn't even had the decency to lay eyes on me, how "Government weapons have been going missing the past few weeks. Reports say there's an enhanced that's involved in the disappearances." Steve reveals, arms crossed upon his chest as confusion swarms me- and seemingly everyone around me. "Yeah and she's sitting right there." Wanda motions to me, but Steve keeps the hesitant look on his face. Wanda was wrong, it's been years since I've stepped foot in Germany and deep down I knew where the conversation was leading, I just didn't want to believe it. "There was a military truck carrying a new strain of highly developed biohazards. It went missing last night." Steve says, eyes landing on me with a ghost of something I couldn't quite make out. I'd call it pity, but it also resembled remorse. It made me sick to my stomach all the "And as you all know, Lexa was pretty much knocked out last night." James backs him up, sharing Steve's apologetic look which only fuelled my anxiety. "We have reason to believe that the enhanced... is Lara." Just like that, a thick silence blankets the entire room. You could hear a heartbeat with the way everyone held their breath, in surprise or disgust, I wasn't entirely sure. "Great, it runs in the family." Wanda sco s as my hands come crashing down onto the table, the wood beneath my palms sinking and cracking on impact. a "That's impossible." "There's footage from just a few months ago, this is at a military lab in Zurich and... I think you should see for yourself." Steve manages to reply, his rounded tone still keeping place as he turns to the screen, a video popping up and beginning to play. It was from a security camera, pointed at a door. For the first few seconds, nothing unfolds. It was just normal footage, barely any people passing by until an alarm begins to go o . Security protocol begins and a thick, metal slab comes crashing down, securing the door while the red, flashing lights paint the picture. For a few moments, it's only pandemonium. Then the footage shakes, like an earthquake had struck and the whole room had shuddered. The metal begins to dent as I sat on the edge of my seat, heart lodged in my throat as the metal began to break away. Someone was punching through it. Then it flew o along with the doors and there she stood; my little sister. I wanted more than anything to drown myself in denial, to look away and fight for her, to say that the girl I knew would never help such monsters- would never be capable of such chaos. But I know those eyes, of course I do. They were the same ones that would stare back at me at the crack of dawn under a fort we made out of blankets, giggling and sharing stories about the world and all Its wonders. She was dressed in black from head to toe, glancing once at the camera before the footage eventually cuts o . All eyes turn back to me, this time most of them were riddled with pity. Even Wanda's. It was like all the air had been sucked out of me, all the life and blood. I did everything to save her, I did it all so she didn't have to. Her eyes replay in my mind on a torturous loop, mocking me, taunting me of my failure, of my meaningless sacrifice. "I know this is hard but we need you to—" Natasha gently begins but I cut her o by rising harshly from my seat, the back of my knees hitting the chair so hurriedly that it flies backwards against the wall as I storm out. I reach the end of the hall, my fingertips dripping of rage, of resentment, of loss. I stop for a split second right by a ledge that presents the lower floor, filled with a few jets and vehicles. I had no time for elevators, so without a second thought I hop over the glass railings, landing three storeys below with a cracking thud. The impact le a shattered imprint on the floor and within seconds, armed agents come out from every possible corner. All led by Maria Hill. a "I have to leave." I say to her, garnering whatever strength I had le to push the words out. "I can't let you do that." She replies and almost as if it were on cue, all the agents weapons li to aim at me. The must have been at least fi y, including the ones on the floors above. "You said you wanted to help but why do I feel like a hostage?" I utter, unbeknownst to me that there were tears silently making their way down my cheeks. "You are a danger to the public in this state. Your emotions will get the better of you and I can't let there be any more casualties." Maria tries to explain, but I still feel the same. I had no intentions of hurting anyone... as long as they stay out of my way and in that moment, every single person there with a gun pointed to me was in my way. "Everyone stand down!" Natasha's voice thunders through the space, walking out of the elevator followed by the rest of the team, all but Wanda. "Lexa... we can help you. We just need to talk. We can figure this out together." Natasha pleads, stepping past Maria and the guards with caution as I stood, horrified. "How can you possibly help me?" I croak out, speaking through my tears as Natasha continues to approach. "We can still save her, we can help her. Please." Natasha begs, sincerity sparkling through her eyes. There's a part of me that wants to trust her, that more than anything wants to go back to the kind of person that knew what hope was, that believed in Its existence. But that isn't me anymore and no matter how much I wanted to believe Natasha, there was nobody in the universe that could help. "I'm sorry." I hear a whisper from behind as the last sight my eyes catch was the swirling crimson of Wanda's magic before I feel my body shut down. It was nothing like the sedation, where the time fades to bleak nothingness and I wake up to beeping machines. When my body gives out, I drop to the ground- the only dierence was it wasn't the compound floor I was on. In a panicked frenzy, I scan my surroundings as I feel myself sink deeper into the confusion and fear. I recognize those walls all too well. The deep, grey cement and rusted, steel doors. My heart began to sink as I make my way back up to my feet, shaky knees carrying me to the latch that allowed me to see out into the halls. "No! Please! I don't want to!" Screams fill the corridor, heart wrenching screams I recognize with ease. Lara. "Please!" She pleads as I began to collide my fists against the thick, cold steel. It wasn't breaking, I could feel my bones cracking and coming back together as the pain shoots up my arms, but I didn't care. I needed to get to her. "Lara!" I exclaim in a frantic tone, my voice spilling out like razors against my throat as I continue trying to break through. Nothing was happening, I couldn't get free. Then she steps into view, just as small as I remember. She looked nothing like the footage and more like the ten year old girl I walked away from years ago. Two large, armed men drag her by her arms as she kicks and screams amidst their grasp, her feet merely dangling upon the floor as they began to near my door. "Stop! Please! Let me do it- let me take it! Please!" I beg, pounding my fists for dear life. They stop. But so does Lara. "Why didn't you save me?" She asks, defeated as the silence blankets She was right in front of my cell, held up by guards and wearing a dusted, torn dress with sunflowers that looked wilted and drained. I stood there with my heart in my throat, tears blurring my vision as my shaking hands still against the metal door. I would give up anything to save her, she had to know that. "I tried to. I promise I did." I croak out, but it was too late. I was too late. Like a wave, everything around me fades into dust as my surroundings began to shi . I was back at the compound, back in my room and at the doorway stood Natasha... and Wanda. Wanda looked at me, horrified pity swimming in her green eyes as I snap my head around, trying to understand what exactly just happened. "I'm sorry. It was the only way I could think of to get you to calm down." Wanda breaks the silence, earning my sharp glare as slowly, the pieces began to fall into place. She was in my head. She tricked me, toyed with my nightmares and made them dance like her own puppets. "Please, just hear us out." Natasha somberly chimes in, approaching my bed and settling herself by my feet. "Why did you show me that?" I ignore Natasha's presence, my eyes glued to the red headed witch who stood by the door with an apologetic look smeared upon her face. There was a very evident crack in my voice, like I was on the verge of tears. At that point, I didn't care to mask it. "I- I don't know." "We need your help. You know her better than anyone, we can still save her." Natasha pleads so ly as I finally turn to look at her, propped up on my elbows with tear stained cheeks. "Why didn't you save me?"Lara's frail voice echoes in my thoughts, twisting the knife that was lodged in my chest with every waking second. I would do anything, give anything to save her. So with a heavy heart and exhausted eyes, I meet Natasha's expectant gaze as I open my mouth to speak. "What do I need to do?" I could see relief wash over Natasha at my words, spewing a bunch of questions that only went in and out of my ears. I was in no condition to listen yet, not a er all I had seen. Everything was only white noise as Lara's screams replay in my mind, over and over. I knew it wasn't real, I knew it wasn't a memory- but that didn't make it hurt any less. Natasha soon realizes my fugue state, halting her words as she makes a move to get up. "You should get some rest. We can talk about everything tomorrow." She sends me a small, tight lipped smile as she passes Wanda, who still stood in silence by the door. "Did you see it too?" I ask flatly, so ly as I plop back down onto the bed. In any other circumstance, I would have been fuming. I would have been lunging at her, trying to tear her apart for her violation. Wanda, of all people had no right to my head, to use me like a puppet for her own intentions but in that moment, I was just tired. I was too tired to be angry, even if it was her. "I didn't mean to." She replies, almost like a whisper. "I'm only doing this for her. Nothing about how I feel changes." I say coldly, my eyes opting to stay on the ceiling as I catch Wanda shi from my peripherals. "I know. I would have done the same thing for my... brother." She hesitates for a moment. I could feel her staring from where she stood; the most vulnerable I had ever seen her as I let the silence take over again. I still despised her with every fibre of my being but right then and there, we shared the deafening silence of loss, of grief. I had heard about Pietro's death from one of the doctors at the base I used to stay at, they mocked it, laughed about it like it was some kind of spectacle. Despite my personal opinions about them, I felt for Wanda. In an odd way, I even pitied her. "If you do that again you better make sure your magic is good enough to keep me at bay because if I get my hands on you, I will not hesitate to kill you." I look over at her, standing there with her arms pressed to her sides. She looked so small, so shameful and apologetic. So di erent from what I know. "I'm sorry." She says, backing out of the room and leaving me to It was safe to say I wasn't able to get any sleep. Every time I'd close my eyes, all I'd see was Lara, her tears, her face, her bloodied dress. The guilt washes over me like a wave I couldn't swim from, filling my throat and lungs with the glaring fact that all I've done was for nothing. I volunteered to be a puppet, to be some kind of lab rat so she wouldn't have to. I spent years in isolation, in pain only to find out she had gone through it too. I feel like I've failed, in every sense of the word I was a failure. In the morning, I could barely stomach to eat a thing. I pushed the breakfast around on my plate, taking miniscule bites before deciding to head in for a shower. They didn't trust me enough to put me in a room with Its own bathroom, so I had to use some sort of communal shower. It was clean, sleek and modern like the rest of the building but... it also had cameras. I was provided with everything I could ever need, clothes, shoes, towels and toiletries since the debacle a few days ago caused me to leave everything behind. Well, not everything. As the warm water pours upon me, the steam takes up most of the empty room as my thoughts circle me once more. I didn't wantto work with the Avengers, I never even planned to stay until Wanda got inside my head. I was ready to rip through them, kill every guard down at the entrance. All I cared about was getting to Lara, it didn't matter the casualties. It would only add to the already long list anyway but as I stood in Wanda's illusion, quite literally breaking my bones over and over to try and tear through a door that wouldn't pry, I only realized one thing. I couldn't do it alone. I was trained not to need anyone, to destroy anything in my path that came between me and a mission. But Lara wasn't a mission, she wasn't someone I was told to take out or another object to steal, she's my sister and the shining fact of it all was that working with a team I despise is the only way to get to her, to try and save her. The irony was almost hilarious, that my last hail mary fell upon the hands of those people perceived to be gods. If this is what I have to do to get her back, I was willing to stu my anger aside. I turn the handle, shutting the water o as I stepped out of the stall. Natasha told me to meet her back at the room we were in yesterday, so I did my best to dry my damp hair and throw on a robe as quickly as I could. I walk back out into the hallway; the clothes I wore previously were stu ed in my arms as footsteps echo from the direction I was heading. "The shield? It's pretty simple. It's all about the angle of the throw." Steve steps into view, eyes trained on Wanda, who was walking right next to him. All three of us come to a halt, Steve instantly shooting a warm smile my way as Wanda's eyes travel on anything that wasn't "Nat's waiting for you upstairs." Steve casually says, sending me a small nod before walking o and leaving an entirely awkward Wanda behind. "You look... clean." She stammers, eyes drawing to her restless hands as she fiddled with her rings. Weird. "That's the point of a shower, yeah." I sarcastically, swirled into confusion of the painfully obscure encounter. "Yeah." She nods, still refusing to meet my eyes. "You want a gold star or something? What are you waiting for?" I ask in a dry chuckle as Wanda rolls her eyes, stepping around me as she reverts back to her hostility. a "Asshole." She mumbles under her breath, heading down the path Steve took which I assumed from past experiences, led to the training rooms. Without missing a beat, I make my way back to my room and change into a fresh pair of clothes as I tied my dark, damp hair up into a ponytail. I was moving as quickly as I could, hoping that if I'm kept busy then I had a chance at outrunning the very fresh, severely unrelenting demons in my head. As expected, Natasha was waiting upstairs, browsing through files on the holographic screen when I walk in. "You asked for me?" I say, earning her attention as she spins to settle her eyes on me. "Yeah, I just wanted to brief you on how everything is going to play out." She hums, nodding over for me to take a seat across her, in which I follow. "So as of right now, we have no exact location of Lara's whereabouts. We've got every unit of our base up in Germany doing a sweep but... it's coming out clean. Even street cameras haven't gotten a glimpse of her. We suspect they're moving her around, trying to prevent what happened with you." Natasha immediately dives in as the corresponding information pops up onto the screen. "Why don't we just look at every base? One by one? She's gotta be in one of them." I voice out, stress imminent in my tone. I had no problem tearing every place apart if that was the cost of getting my sister back. "First of all, we can't go in guns blazing to every HYDRA base we find. We have to think of the possible casualties, civilians included. It takes a lot of manpower for what you're suggesting. Secondly, if they even get a whi that we're coming for her, she'd be a lot harder to find. They're not about to lose their strongest agent, not a er losing you." Natasha sternly explains. "The smartest bet here is to wait, the moment we get a glimpse of her location we can move immediately." She adds. I understood her point, it was a logical one too but there was something unsettling about sitting here and doing nothing while Lara is god-knows-where with god-knows-who. It made me feel helpless, weak even. "I know you don't like it but if we're going to do this properly, it's the only way. Now can you tell me what you know about her? They've wiped every trace of her files, the only thing we have is her name and a hunch at the extent of her abilities." Natasha gently requests, there's a so ness to her usually cold tone that resonates with me as I, with a heavy heart, try my best to comply. "What are they? Her abilities. What do you think they are?" I ask, eyes glancing over to the screen that displayed a still of the footage from yesterday. Just looking at Lara that way made my heart sink. "Like you, she seems to be unnaturally strong and it's unclear but it looks like she can regenerate her health quickly too. Was she... always that way?" Natasha was clearly hesitant, probably hoping to avoid another meltdown on my end as her words slip out. "No. Not even close, when we were younger I always knew I was di erent. I'd fall o my bike and the wound would be gone in minutes, I'd accidentally tear the knobs o of doors too. We tried to see if she had anything, but she didn't. I know for sure she didn't." I sigh, the memories flooding back to me as I spoke. "When was the last time you saw her?" Natasha questions, eyes trained on me as my heart drops at the visual of our goodbyes. "Seven years ago. I was fi een, she was ten. I... I volunteered for their experiments in exchange for my family's life. My father used to work with Strucker, that was before he got his hands on the sceptre. My father wanted out when his experiments became too... brutal. The thing is, when you work with HYDRA there's never an out." I reveal against my natural instinct of defences. "They were going to kill all of us. My father made sure to keep my abilities a secret, afraid that if anybody knew then I'd be the next test subject but on the supposed day of our execution, I made a deal. Showed them what I could do, promised I'd be theirs to use if Lara and my father could walk free. They took the deal, I had five minutes to say goodbye and that was it. I never- I guess it was my fault too for being naïve. For thinking that anyone like them could keep their word." I mumble, defeated in my seat as Natasha listens intently. "It wasn't your fault." She so ly claims, a sad look plastered on her face as I let out a bitter chuckle. Of course it was. "Spare me the pity, Natasha." I spew coldly, eyes darting back to the screen. She was so far from the little girl i le behind and at that point, i wasn't sure what terrified me more. The fact that i couldn't recognize her or the fact that she looked exactly like me. "Does anyone know when it happened? When they took her?" I ask the question that's been plaguing my mind, still unsure if i was ready to hear the answer. "The records begin three years ago but... it could have been earlier. Like I said, all we have are scraps." Natasha says as a cold sweat blankets my skin. Three years. Three years of her su ering, three years of my oblivion. I think about Lara every day, the mere thought of her was the only thing that got me through the most cruel nights of my life. When I stood amidst blood and destruction, my hands dripping of the sins i've committed, looking at my reflection and seeing nothing but another monster—I'd think about someday. The possibility of someday finding a way out, someday returning home, seeing her again and picking up where we le o . a But how could I have known? "Do you... have anything on my father?" I struggle to croak out, the mere mention of the topic burning me inside out. "His body was recovered at an abandoned research facility... three years ago." It hits me like a truck, three years of fighting for ghosts, of holding onto a someday that was spun into impossibility. I felt idiotic, manipulated, i felt weak. "So what now?" "For now you stay here, with us. I'm going to be really honest with you, a er the stunts you pulled— Maria thinks you're a threat. Fury is being swayed that way too. As long as you're here you're my responsibility, but you need to help me out." Natasha says flatly, her authoritative tone seeping out of her red lips once more. "Fine." I begrudgingly give in, it was the least I could do a er all the help she so adamantly gave. For what reason? I still didn't know but it was a step closer to Lara and for now, that's enough for me to ignore the questions. "I don't think you're a threat and they need to see that too so... you'll be helping out. I know your skillset; I know your background so you'll be assigned to help train some of the new agents and... Recruits" Natasha informs me with anticipated caution, like she was scavenging my face for some sort of reaction. I let the idea marinate in my head for a few moments, thinking that if they were going to keep me here— I might as well be doing something. And honestly, a trainer sounds better than a killer. "Okay." I hum, seemingly taking her by surprise. "Okay?" She reiterates, brows furrowed as confusion floods her face. "Yeah. I like to be kept busy, if i get to beat a few guys into shape then so be it." I shrug. "Your first session starts tomorrow morning and please, try to keep your cool." Natasha pleads with a defeated sigh, a look in her eyes that says she was expecting something more. Her requests weren't the most outrageous i've come across, admittedly i've been asked to do worse. Much worse. Training recruits may have taken the number one spot on my list of the most normal job i've ever had, well— tying with the café i worked part time for when i was thirteen. I had a background in hand to hand combat, weaponry and martial arts so the task didn't seem daunting at all and yet Natasha was sitting there with a look that just anticipated chaos. Why the hell would i lose my cool? "You?" Wanda and I exclaim simultaneously as she stood by the entry of the training room, donning a simple black shirt and sweats. It was the next day, supposedly my first day training "recruits" who i expected to be puny little agents, not a witch who made my blood boil. As we stood there, bewildered and very evidently annoyed, i was beginning to understand Natasha's demeanor the night before. If she told me i would be training Wanda Maximo, I would have laughed to her face and told her that i'd rather shoot myself in the face a thousand times than be stuck in a room with Wanda. And yet there we are. "You've got to be kidding me. Where's Steve?" She instantly protests, looking around the room with irritation dripping from her green eyes. "You think i'm ecstatic? I'm all you get. Haven't you heard? I'm the new trainer." I hu, giving into the unavoidable situation as my tone matches her annoyance. I turn on my heel to rummage through the gym bag I was given which was mostly made up of training equipment and some practice knives. It wasn't a complete set, per se. Apparently, guns were entirely o limits for me, which is probably a smart move. "This is stupid, i'm leaving." She fires back. "Why? You scared of me?" I chuckle, finally finding the hand wrap amidst the cluster of items. "Scared? Of you? Please." Wanda sco s as i turn around, briskly wrapping the cloth around my hand with nonchalant speed. I settle my eyes on her with a challenging smirk. If this was really happening, I'm going to at least make sure to have a little fun. By that, i mean pressing her buttons every chance i get. It brought me a strange sense of satisfaction, watching her flare up. "Prove it." "Fine." She rolls her eyes, dropping her bag by the door and pulling out her own wraps. Once we were both settled, i figured to assess her skills in combat y'know, without all the magic. Wanda stood before me upon the mat, waiting with a scowl for my instructions as i do a quick run through in my head of the course i intended to take. "What have you done so far?" I ask, propping a hand on my hip as Wanda nods over to the rack of weights.

"Mostly just working out. Steve's really big on fitness... if you haven't noticed." She sasses promptly, her revelation sparking my interest

"So you haven't done any combat training?" I ask and she shakes her

"Your magic, i know. Take it away and what are you?" I cut her o,

"You can't just rely on your powers. Fights are unpredictable, sure nine out of ten times your magic is e ective. It keeps you safe, keeps the enemies at bay. What happens when one slips past you, gets their hands on you— what then?" I challenge, taking daunting strides in

condescendingly, amused at the way I could clearly see the irritation

"I do this." She smirks, hands raising as i'm flung across the room. My back hits the wall in a harsh thud, knocking the wind out of me as i

"I really fucking hate you." I hu, stretching my then sore back as i

If i hadn't taken Natasha's words into consideration, i would be charging at that smug little witch— itching to get my hands around her neck. But i promised to keep my cool and even if every inch of me wanted to ram a fist through her face, I opted for a daggered glare

"Don't worry, It's mutual." She says with a sarcastic smile.

Continue reading next part \Box

a

reclaim my spot from across her with a look of distaste.

head, earning a mischievous smile from me.

"I don't even know why I need to. I have my—"

watching her sink into begrudged silence.

'Weak." I complete harshly, striking a nerve.

her direction until i'm only a few inches away.

wash over her at my taunts.

land on my feet.

I really fucking hate her.

instead—one she returned happily.

This is going to be impossible.

"What do you do when they get this close?" I whisper

even more.

This is going to be fun.