"Can't sleep?" I whisper to Wanda, who was plastered in my arms

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with her head resting on my chest as her lightly damp, autumn hair messily cascades between us. A er the shower, my legs felt like jelly for a multitude of reasons though unfortunately, not all of them were good. I could still feel myself reeling from the e ects of earlier that day, and Wanda could tell I still wasn't up to my usual energy so she made it a point to make sure everyone knew not to disturb us. She was incredibly patient, attentive to my every need that I had to remind her a few times that I was just a little tired, not laying on my death bed. With the door locked and the room all to ourselves, neither of us really felt the need to put on any proper clothes. With only our underwear on, we laid under the covers, enjoying the warmth our skin brought pressed against one another amidst the cold weather outside. The rain had only gotten stronger as the night went on, thrashing against the windows in a steady thud as I lightly ran my finger down her back. She wasn't okay, I could feel it. She hadn't relaxed, not one bit. Every time i'd struggle to move, to do anything, it was like alarms would go o in her head. It was painful to see her so scrambled, so desperate and afraid. I just wish, with all my heart that I could just ease her mind but it was beyond me. I knew her fears ran deeper than what had happened to me, so I just held her close. As close as I could, hoping maybe if I held her enough she'd see that I wasn't going anywhere. "No. Can you?" She mumbles so ly, moving to look up at me through tired eyes. I o er her a sad smile, bringing a hand up to her face, gently cupping her cheeks. "What's on your mind?" I ask, unable to bear the agony that came with having to watch her unravel all because of me. "I just—I'm scared." She says, admitting it directly for the first time since I had returned. Hearing her say it with those eyes, that defeated look on her face was a whole nother level of torturous. "Nothing is going to happen. I'm here now, with you. We're together." I soothe, but it barely does anything. Her eyes were still so desperate, so beaten as she looks back at me. I can tell she's trying so hard to believe me, but I wasn't going to hold it against her if she couldn't. I understood that all she had felt and been through could have been massively traumatic, that the events of today had acted like some kind of trigger for her. I couldn't imagine how it must have struck her, to come up and find me covered in blood, barely able to take a step by myself. I felt a pang of guilt for her spiral, feeling some sort of responsibility for all the resurfaced fear she's having to deal with now. "I feel like if I close my eyes, you'll be gone." She says so ly, weakly as my hands still to gently rest against the small of her back. "Weren't you the one who said that danger is part of this?" I raise a brow, speaking as tenderly as I could as Wanda releases a so sigh. "This is di erent. You're di erent. I can't lose you. Not you too". She whispers the last few words, but I catch it anyway. I place a gentle kiss atop her forehead, my hands moving to slowly tread through her hair as she keeps her eyes on me. a "I promise that no matter what, i'll always come back to you." I can't stress just how much I meant it, wishing I could rip out my heart and show her the sincerity I held. "Do you believe the whole theory about past lives?" I ask out of nowhere, skimming the first thought o the top of my head as she looks back ar me curiously. "I mean... I guess. Nothing is impossible anymore." She replies reluctantly, still waiting for me to explain such a bizzarely timed question. "Then you believe that we'd have more lifetimes a er this one?" A small smile crawls onto my lips at the adorable look on her face. I could practically see the gears in her mind turning, trying to guess where my questions led. "Yes?" She answers uncertainly. "Then i'll promise you this; I promise that I'll find you in every lifetime — every single one until we get the story we deserve." I say to her, my heart rested on my every word as her breath hitches and she melts into me. a "No matter where you are, i'll find you and we'll fall in love and be... happy. We'll be as small as we want and everything will be okay." I whisper, planting a kiss atop her forehead as her eyes flutter closed in satisfaction. "What if i'm a bird?" She asks so ly, mumbling against my chest as I chuckle. a "A bird?" I reiterate, looking down at her as she nods slightly. "In our next life. What if i'm a bird?" She asks, sounding so adorably serious that my heart could burst just by the way she spoke. "I'll still find you. I'll be a bird too and we can spend our days flying wherever you want." I smile at the thought, resting my cheek against the top of her head as she hums so ly. "What if you were human, though?" She asks again a er a few moments, and i'm only glad her eyes were not on me because I had the biggest smile on my face I probably look deranged. "Then i'd build you the prettiest, biggest bird house and i'd listen to your songs every day until I die. I'd be happy then too." I reply, relishing in the way she nuzzles herself into me, her smile pressed against my chest as she moves to li her head. She pulls me in, pressing her lips to mine with the dreamiest look in her eyes and I wonder how could I ever walk away, how could I ever leave someone like her? I don't think she understood the way i'd tear the world apart before I leave her again because just as much as she was afraid to lose me, I was just as terrified to be torn from her. "Did it hurt?" She asks, taking me by surprise. Her smile falters, falling into the same pained look she had when she found me bloodied. "We don't have to talk about it. I don't think it's a good idea." I o er gently, lightly tracing my nails against the base of her scalp in a small attempt to soothe her. "I just... want to know. I want to know everything so I can stop wondering." She practically pleads, and despite my reservation, I find it in myself to comply. "It felt like I was on fire." I sigh, feeling her avid stare pierce through me as she subtly tightens her grasp around my waist. "It was like every inch of me was burning and my skin was... getting ripped o . I've never felt anything like it. It wasn't like I was stabbed it was like I was tortured." I recall, my heart sinking with the memory of the pain as I spoke. I could see her subtle winces, like the visual in her head was breaking her heart. "There really was no face? Nothing to recognize?" She asks and as much as I wished I could give her something more, I was just as clueless as everyone else. "No. Everything was covered and..." Right as i'm speaking, a spark of memory flashes in my head. The voice. The voice was female, that I remember. a "Tell me, do you trust your friends?" "What? What's wrong?" Wanda speaks up, the worry shining in her voice again as i'm snapped back into reality. "It's... nothing. It was just strange." I brush it o, opting to keep the information to myself. I wasn't sure how she'd take it, if she'd spiral even more— I didn't want this to consume her. "I'm sorry." I place a hand under her chin, li ing her eyes to meet mine. "For what?" She asks, visibly confused as a sad smile places itself onto my lips. "I know this is hard on you. I get it. I'm sorry if I scared you." I say with utter honesty, feeling her shi to lay on her side, propping herself up on an elbow as she uses her magic to switch the bedside lamp on. "What scares me is losing you. What scares me, is the thought of you hurting and me— not being able to save you." She shakily says, tears welling up in her eyes once more as the illumination from the lamp beads on her face. I promptly sit up, pulling to hold her against my chest as she wraps her arms around my neck. "You always save me." I whisper, peppering kisses upon her bare shoulder as she pulls me closer. She's holding on like life depended on it and in a way, it did. "I guess we'll have to reschedule that date, huh?" I ask lightly, feeling her pull back with tear stained cheeks and a small smile. "We have time." She hums, pressing a kiss to my lips. Neither of us got much sleep that night, but the air felt a lot lighter. I could feel her relax against me more o en, even when she'd check up at me sometimes. Sometimes, I can feel her listening to my heartbeat, like she was relishing in the sound of my existence. Even until the sun rose, we never strayed. We laid there, tangled in each other like nothing else existed outside of us. Eventually, when morning came Natasha had found her way to my door. Peppering it with knocks as I scramble out of bed, leaving a still sleeping Wanda under the covers as I throw on a shirt before answering. I swing it open, watching the look on Natasha's face spill relief as her eyes go over me. "How are you feeling?" She asks so ly, the guilt in her voice was so prominent that it nearly made my heart drop. "I'm good, I promise. What's up?" I ask, o ering her the best smile I could muster to hopefully ease her burden. Natasha had always been vocal about feeling a responsibility to me and I could tell by the look on her face that she didn't take what happened yesterday lightly at "I just wanted to check up on you and let you know we're doing everything we can to trace whoever attacked you. Steve and I were up all night pulling surveillance footage from shops, security cameras, even tra ic cameras. We'll figure this out." She says, the passion in her words dripping from her lips as I step outside to pull Natasha into a hug. Almost immediately, she melts into my embrace, holding me impossibly close as I bury my face in the crook of her neck. "It wasn't your fault." I say, rubbing gentle circles upon her back as she nods weakly in my arms. "This is never going to happen again. I'm going to find who did it." Natasha says, pulling away but keeping me at arm's length as she takes one more good look at me. "If you need anything, you know where to find me." She says, finally letting me go as I o er her a smile. "Also, tell Wanda she's late for training. That is... if she's able to handle it today." Natasha chuckles, turning to walk away and leaving me a blushing mess before I could even protest. With a smirk on my face, I head back into my room just in time to find Wanda shi ing in her spot, patting around to feel for me and when she realizes i'm not there, her eyes shoot open in a panic only to find me, leaning against the drawers with my arms folded over my chest. "You're too far." She grumbles, a small yawn slipping from her lips as her magic appears, wisping between her fingers as I'm practically dragged back into bed. "That's not fair." I whine amidst a stifled laugh, Wanda not giving me much time to complain before rolling over to drape half of her body onto me as she nuzzles her face into my neck. "Sleepy." She hums lazily, eyes fluttering closed as my heart goes wild in my chest. She could be such a baby, which is what i'm slowly uncovering as time went on. I mean, I wasn't complaining. It was quite an adorable contrast to how most people outside of the team perceive her. To most, she's this so spoken, brooding witch who keeps to herself and yet, here in my bed, she's practically a koala who would plunge into her death if she wasn't constantly holding onto me. "As much as I love this, and you." I place little kisses on her forehead, li ing her chin enough to pepper my kisses down to her nose and a few quick ones on her lips. "You're late for training, according to Nat." I mumble, watching as she actively bites back a smile all while keeping her eyes wired shut. "Kisses." She whispers lightly, lazily as I roll my eyes and comply, planting quick pecks all over her face as her lips break into a grin that scrunches her nose. "Thanks." She giggles, finally opening her eyes and returning a kiss to my cheek before crawling o of me and moving to sit at the edge of my bed for a stretch. "I forgot to ask, so what did Steve get for Nat?" Wanda hums, rising to her feet. She then heads to the chair in the corner, swi ly grabbing the towel she used last night and tossing it over her shoulder. It was almost hard to concentrate on her question when she was treading around my room in just her underwear. I was seriously reconsidering letting her go to training. "I can hear you right now." She laughs, shaking her head as she approaches to sit at the edge of my bed. "Sorry. You're distracting." I don't even bother to hide the warm flush creeping onto my cheeks, a er everything we've done in the past few hours I think there's nothing le for me to hide from her. "How about I distract you in the shower, come with me?" She o ers and of course, I waste no time in peeling the covers o of my body and scrambling to get o the bed as Wanda bursts out laughing. "Well? Come on then!" I grab my towel, bolting to the bathroom as she trails closely behind. "You're an idiot." She exclaims amidst her laughter, but i've already slipped behind her and wrapped my arms around her waist. "Am I really?" I wiggle my brows, looking at her through the mirror before us. I gently rock us in place, my fingers lightly tapping against the skin of her stomach as she hands me my set toothbrush and picks up her own from the holder. I know it's shallow, that it's a pretty mundane thing but I liked that her toothbrush was in my bathroom. I knew she was still uncomfortable leaving me on my own for the next few nights, so I made the suggestion of moving a bit of her stu here into my room. I didn't have much clothes or items anyway, so I had more than enough room to accommodate whatever she wanted to bring over, which happened to only be a few shirts, pants and toiletries. "How'd you know Steve got Nat?" I mumble, my toothbrush lodged into my mouth as Wanda takes hers out. "I can read minds, remember?" She says, popping it back in and finishing up. I step out from behind her, waiting for her to finish rinsing before doing so myself and plopping my toothbrush back into place, right next to hers. "That's not fair—so do you know everyone's?" I question worriedly, because if she did then she knew I got her. "You don't have to worry. I don't know whatyou got me—but I know you got me." She chuckles, slipping out of her underwear as a pout crawls onto my lips. I really wanted it to be a surprise. a "Did you know that night?" I ask, stripping of my own clothes and stepping into the shower as she adjusts the temperature and turns the knob. "Okay, in my defense we weren't on speaking terms and I was curious." She explains as the water cascades, peppering our bodies as she reaches for the soap. "You're no fun." I hu, moving around her to step under the stream. I feel her lathered hands begin to roam my body, taking her time as she pulls me against her. "I can be fun." She whispers, planting kisses that trail from my shoulders up to my neck. "You go down that road and you're not getting out of this room today." I warn, trying to keep my breathing steady amidst her so kisses as she laughs against my skin. "It's funny that you think that's a threat." I was partially right. Wanda definitely didn't get to her training with Natasha, but Steve was able to pull her for a workout a few hours before lunch. I could still feel her reluctance to part with me, but I informed her that I was heading down to see Lara anyway so with that settled, she finally let Steve steal her away as I made my way down to see my sister. I also had plans to find Natasha sometime in the day to ask for tips on gi wrapping, because I already knew that if I tried to tackle that all on my own then i'd end up handing Wanda a gi that looked like it was wrapped by a toddler. It was bad enough that we couldn't push through with the dinner and even if I knew Wanda didn't mind, I still really wanted to do something even halfway decent for all of her troubles. "Hey." Jess greets, spotting me from across the room right as I walk "How's everything? How's Lara?" I ask, shooting her a smile as she approaches. "I should be the one asking how youare." She notes, raising a brow as she adjusts her glasses. "Still alive and kicking. Don't worry, I don't go down that easily." I joke lightly, watching as a small laugh falls from her red lips. She leads me to Lara's door, a few files in her arms as we come to a stop right before I turn the knob. "She knows what happened. I told her about yesterday. Other than that, she's the same as always. Di icult." Jess hums jokingly as I roll "We're sisters, shouldn't you expect that by now?" I bid her goodbye, stepping inside to find Lara sitting on her bed, back pressed against the wall as she tosses a makeshi paper ball into the air. "So you arealive." She says, not bothering to look my way as I head to the chair Natasha had dragged in there a few days ago. "Unfortunately. Nice to see you are too." I reply casually, plopping down onto the seat as her movements still and she looks to me. She looks conflicted, the battle behind her eyes wasn't hard to miss. It was like a push and pull, a tug of war going on in her head that I wished, more than anything to completely understand. "I'm fine, if you're wondering." I say with a sigh that spirals her defenses, her walls shooting up once more as she goes back to tossing the ball up into the air. "I'm not. I couldn't care less if you died." She says sharply, but at that point her words only shoot through me. I knew better than to let it hurt. "Well it's your unlucky day." I reply casually, moving to lounge back as I stretch my arms out to rest behind my head, much to Lara's irritation. "Why are you even here?" She groans, harshly catching the paper in the palm of her hand as she shoots me a glare. "I wanted to hang out." I hum. If we were going to play this game, might as well make it entertaining. "Don't you have your shiny little hero friends? Why don't you go stu yourself up their asses?" She seethes, her burning glare burrowing through me as I stifle a laugh. "I'm pretty sure we're not close enough for butt stu yet. Maybe next year though." I could see her frustration starting to rise, her demeanor shaking with every snotty answer I throw her way. "So you're here to make my imprisonment even more unbearable. Fucking amazing." She hu s, tossing the ball far against the wall adjacent to her as a scowl paints onto her lips. "Oh stop being so dramatic. I just want to spend some time with you, did you know Christmas Eve is in two days? Got any plans?" I joke, wiggling my eyebrows as she plops down onto her bed and pulls a pillow over her face. "Please, just kill me." She groans against the fabric, further fuelling my amusement. So that's how most of the hours went, with me opting to speak to her like she wasn't constantly fuming with rage at my mere existence while she tries her hardest not to implode at my nonchalance. She could hate me as much as she wanted, but that didn't mean I was going to return the favor. I was hell bent on making the most of our first Christmas together in nearly a decade, even if we had to do it with glass in between and her sending me death glares every five minutes. I grab a quick sandwich from the dining hall, thinking maybe I was getting used to eating food that tasted like paper more than anything else. It was getting easier to stomach with every try, honestly. I'm still not proud of it, though. I didn't expect Wanda to finish until a few hours before dinner time, which was fine to me. I was kind of afraid that if we spent every waking moment together, then she'd get tired of me or something so the little time in the day we spend apart felt like a little bit of relief, hopefully on her end as well. I grab her gi from my drawers, heading over to Natasha's room for the gi wrapping lesson I was eager to get. A er a handful of unanswered knocks, I step inside to find it completely empty. Thinking nothing of it, I check the training rooms, expecting to find Steve and Wanda—but they were nowhere to be found as well. All that occupied the rooms were a bunch of agents, plastered around working out. With a strange feeling spreading through my chest, I head to check the last place that popped into my head. The conference rooms. Usually, that's where they did most of their work and when I turn down the hall, I realize i'm set on the right path when Wanda's voice echoes through the corridor, stopping me in my tracks. "How is that going to help?" She sounded angry, bone chillingly angry, the kind that was enough for her magic to appear wisping between her fingertips. I was about to barge in, standing only a few steps away from the door when Steve's frustration paints the air. "She won't be able to handle it!" He sounds just like the way he did in the car, frustrated, puzzled, upset. "Who are you to judge that?" Wanda fires back, the feeling in my chest rising into anxiety as my feet sink into the ground, cementing me in place. "Wanda, we have to wait." Natasha's voice of reason chimes in, seemingly trying to cut through the heavy tension. "You saw what happened yesterday, Nat. It's time." Wanda pushes, only confirming the looming thought clawing at my mind. They were talking about me. It was like the pressure in my chest was building, readying to churn my stomach right when I thought things were going to be okay and I did something I never thought i'd do, something I would have never even thought of weeks ago—I pretended not to hear. I take a few steps, making sure to thud it heavy enough for them to hear so that when I get to the door, the conversation has died out. "Oh— there you are!" I put on a smile, looking right at Natasha as all three of them stood by the head of the table, looking at me with widened eyes. "Hey." Wanda clears her throat, standing in her training outfit as she plasters on a painfully half meant smile. "Hey— I was looking for Nat. I just needed help with something." I speak as casually as I could, which all of them buy with ease as they turn to look at Natasha. "Oh, yeah. What did you need?" She says with a small smile, sounding so sickeningly convincing that my heart actually sinks. "It's... confidential gi stu." I glance over at Wanda, a glint of guilt shining in her green eyes as she keeps her smile on that nearly kills me. "Actually— nevermind. You guys look busy." I swi ly retract my words, hoping none of them can see the cracks in my demeanor as I begin to back out of the room. "No it's fine we were finishing up." Natasha calls out, promptly closing the files littered on the table as I wave her o with nonchalance. "No, it's alright. I'm good. Gotta keep it as secret as possible." I chuckle so ly, turning on my heel and heading out to the corridor before any of them could get a word out. "Lexa." Wanda's voice stops me in my tracks, her footsteps drawing near as I take a deep breath, put on a face of indi erence, and turn around. "Are you okay?" She asks, genuinely concerned as I make sure to keep my thoughts guarded. She gets close enough to touch, wasting no time in resting her hands on my hips, fingers slipping into the waistband of my sweats as she pulls me close. "Yeah, i'm fine. I'm just nervous. I really... want you to like my gi ." I excuse, o ering her a tight lipped smile as her eyes go over my face, like she was trying to figure me out—like she was trying to get in my head. "Tell me, do you trust your friends?" "I'd love anything from you. You could give me a half empty soda can and i'd cherish it." She breaks out into a smile, the tenderness in her eyes returning as a small chuckle falls from my lips. "You should have said that earlier, would have saved me a few bucks." I throw in a joke, willing myself to keep a smile on as she rolls her eyes and plants a kiss to my lips. "I'll see you tonight? We could move my TV into your room and watch a few movies. I know Sam's got a good collection stashed somewhere." She lightly o ers, looking genuinely delighted by the idea as I give her a small nod. "That sounds perfect. I'll see you tonight." I hum, moving to press another kiss to her lips—lingering a little longer and hoping my heart would stop sinking if I just... stayed there. Eventually, we pull away and she lets go with a smile. Even giving me an adorable little wave as I backed farther down the corridor, turning on my heel to head back to the elevator with my heart in my hands. I just wanted, for once, to have a holiday that wasn't filled with emptiness— with heartache and longing. Maybe it was stupid, maybe it was so idiotic, pathetic and desperate of me to keep to myself, but I was so tired. Maybe just this once, I could tough it out and the feeling would go away. I trust Wanda, I trust her with my life. I knew she loves me, I could feel it in the way she holds me, the way she kisses me—but that voice, that stupid fucking voice in that wet, smelly alley keeps whispering over my shoulder like a demon I couldn't run from. Without anywhere else to go, I head back to Lara. The boxed gi s Steve and I were able to pick up, all in my hands along with some tape and a good few rolls of wrapping paper as I tread through the doors to garner strange looks from doctors and guards alike. The moment I step into Lara's room, gaining her attention immediately as an annoyed groan fills the room. "Oh my fucking god, what now?" She complains, right in the middle of what seems to be a workout since she was doing push ups in the middle of her area. "Just going to wrap some gi s. You don't have to mind me." I say so ly, seriously that she freezes in place, shi ing to push herself up to her knees as she watches me sit on the ground, laying all the items in my arms out on the floor.

I did mean it, I wasn't there to bicker. She could throw as many snide remarks as she wanted but the truth was, I just really didn't want to be alone. If I was all alone, I knew my thoughts would eat me alive. At least this way, i'd have the confusion of putting all of the gi s together along with Lara's resentment to keep me from spiralling. "You have no idea what to do, don't you?" She groans, moving to sit on the ground with her legs crossed over each other. "I do—just give me a minute to remember." I reply, lying through my teeth as I stare at the items laid out before me. How hard could wrapping a present be? Apparently, it was pretty hard. A er only a few minutes, the neat floor was littered with pieces of crumpled wrapping paper and slices of discarded tape sticking to anything it could—including me. I even found tape stuck to the top of my head, which was confusing. As i'm clearly struggling, Lara was lounging on her bed, watching me with judgement as I dig a deeper grave for myself in the mess i've made. "Jesus fuck!" I hu, tearing the paper that wasn't long enough to go around the box as frustration floods my senses. I toss it aside, adding to the piling mess around me as Lara begrudgingly crawls o of her "You're fucking hopeless. Lay it out." She instructs coldly, taking a seat near the glass as my eyes snap up to her. "What?" "Stop trying to guess how much paper you're going to need. Unroll the wrapper, cover the box and thencut. It's not rocket science." She says with irritation dripping from her tone, motioning for me to follow as I eventually do. "Alright now cut it lengthwise." She continues to instruct while I do my best to keep up. "Okay now fold that over until it reaches the other end—tape it down. Yeah. Pinch the sides in—not like that dumbass!" She groans, running a frustrated hand through her hair. "I'm fucking trying!" I hu in defense, looking to her as I uncertainly follow her previous commands to see if I was doing it right. "Yeah. Like that. Tape it down, then bring one flap down, tape it, then do the same with the other. Keep the edges tight." She says, motioning with her hands as I comply and eventually finish with the first one. When I realize that it didn't look like utter garbage, I was almost in awe. "This is why I was always the one wrapping our presents." She whispers bitterly, looking regretful of her comment as she stares at me— trying to analyze if I had caught it and even if I did, I play it o . I pretend like I hadn't heard as I fight back the smile daring to plaster on my lips. "You know how to wrap a circle?" I ask, holding up a circular box as she takes a deep, irritated breath... and nods. We spend a good hour of her screaming at my every mistake—but still helping me get it done. When all of the boxes were set and wrapped, I began trying to clean up the abundance of discarded paper from my many failed attempts. I felt a lot lighter, finding some sort of comfort through being able to finally do something with Lara. It was probably nothing to her, or to anyone else. I mean, she only barked orders at me to help me wrap a bunch of gi s, but it was something. She wasn't constantly spewing threats, or telling me how shitty I am. We just... existed together for a short while, doing something completely normal and for a moment, I could pretend like we were back in our living room having a petty argument the way we always used to do. "Hey." I turn to Lara, who was back on her bed as I held the mess and wrapped gi s in my arms. "What do you want?" She flatly replies, looking to me with a brow raised as I o er her a small smile. "Thank you for helping me." I hum, hoping to the stars she could feel how much I meant it. She looks back at me with conflict glimmering in her eyes, looking like she wants to say something—but deciding against it anyway. "Whatever." She sighs, plopping her head back down against the pillow and I take it as my cue to leave. I step out of her room, nearly crashing fully into Jess who swerves out of the way and steadies me before everything in my arms get thrown into the air. "Be careful there, Santa Claus." She chuckles, making sure i've regained my balance before letting go. "Sorry—sorry." I shake my head, looking back at her over the mound of stu I was carrying as she moves to help me, taking some of the trash to the bin in the corner to ease my burden. "You're going back up?" She asks, and I give her a little nod as we walk together, Jess subsequently holding the door open for me as we head to the elevators. "So... looks like I've missed out on a lot." She hums, looking to me as we wait for the elevator doors to ding open. "What do you mean?" "You and Ms. Maximo? I think I hazily remember a whole argument about how I was ' making it a thing' She teases, a knowing smirk on her lips as a blush creeps onto my cheeks at the cringe enducing memory. "At the time— it was true! You were totally making a thing out of nothing." I defend amidst my laughter, stepping into the then open elevator as Jess kindly presses for my floor along with her own. "It definitely doesn't look like nothing now." Jess remarks, finding amusement in my playful discomfort as I relax against the wall. "Well, things change." I shrug, hiding my heating face behind the gis as Jess releases a small laugh. "Clearly. How are you though? Outside of that. Are you sleeping enough? How are the nightmares?" She asks, sounding like a trusted and true doctor as she eyes me expectantly. "I'm..." My mind contemplates honesty, the temptation of confiding in someone— of telling Jess what I heard was tugging on my heavy heart. I didn't want to feel so alone but at the same time, for some reason, I didn't feel like I could trust anyone with that conversation. "Fine. I'm doing really good, actually. I've been sleeping well—" I clear my throat, putting on a smile as the doors open on my floor. Jess makes a move to walk with me, apparently she was going to walk me to my door. "I bet you are." She laughs, a suggestive look in her eyes that makes the heat crawl up my cheeks again. a "Don't make thisa thing." I warn playfully, our paces matched as we

tread down the hallway to my room.

open.

decorate it or anything.

"Oh i'm not going to get into that argument again. I'm not making anything— a thing." Jess rolls her eyes, both of us coming to a stop by my door as she swi ly grabs the knob for me and swings the door

"Thanks." I mumble, quickly stepping inside to set the gis and items onto my still empty desk. I hadn't had much of a chance to really

"You still use the journal?" She asks, stepping into the room as I spin

"Oh yeah. Almost everyday. It really helps, I forgot to properly thank you for it." I nod. I used up most of my spare time writing, especially when I was feeling like the walls were closing in on me again. It was

"It's no problem. I'm just glad I could help." Jess hums, shi ing on her heel to head for the door that swings open before she could reach.

"I found Sam's—" Wanda strolls in, the beaming smile on her face dropping when her eyes find Jess. It was like a switch was flipped and

"What are you doing here?" She asks Jess, her tone flat and cold—so chillingly cold that it spirals Jess into silence. She was afraid of Wanda—which I understood. Nobody would be comfortable existing

"She helped me with the gis." I cut in, pulling Wanda's attention as her eyes trail down to the giss peppering my desk and eases up.

"I'll see you around, Jess. Thanks." I turn to Jess, o ering her a small smile as she promptly steps around Wanda and heads out, shutting

"I could have helped." Wanda notes coldly, setting her du el bag

"Yeah but did you really need to ask he?" Wanda says it with so much distaste, stripping o her clothes as a thin layer of sweat covers her skin. Okay, so maybe pretending I was fine would be a little easier

"You were busy." I try to reason, pushing the lump down in my throat

"She just helped me carry it up. Lara was the one that helped me with wrapping." The moment the words leave my lips, she spins around, snapping to me in only her training pants with a look of surprise

"Lara helped you?" She asked, looking genuinely surprised as a small

"Well, of course there was some heavy verbal abuse but... she did. She helped me." I couldn't fight the happiness in my tone, which Wanda quickly returns as she wastes no time in pulling me in,

cupping my face and planting a gentle kiss on my lips that makes me

"I'm really happy for you. That's... that's big." She beams, pulling

And just like that, there she is. My Wanda. The girl who smiled brighter than the sun, who always spoke to me with sincerity and warmth, the one who held me like I was the most precious treasure in the world and kissed me like there was nothing that existed outside of us. It was bittersweet, because my bones ached to keep the trust I

My mind keeps flashing back to the conversation I overheard, to the feeling in my chest and the way their voices sounded so strained— so critical and upset. I was in a tug of war with myself, with my doubts because every time I look at Wanda, it was so hard to feel anything but love, to accept anything but the wonder that was in my arms. I keep telling myself I know Wanda, I've always known Wanda.

Continue reading next part □

down by the drawers and heading right for the bathroom.

How the fuck does someone look this good all the time?

as I go a er her, despite feeling heavy myself.

if she always looked sogood.

plastered on her features.

smile crawls onto my lips.

giggle against hers.

have for her.

away as I look back at her.

But now, i'm not so sure.

around to see her looking at the item perched on my bedside.

becoming second nature, almost theraputic to do.

I could practically feel the air shi instantly.

on Wanda's bad side, not even me.

the door to leave us.