

Chapter 15

For the next two days, I am confined to my hospital bed, which shortens my temper drastically. No matter how I argue, the doctors are insisting they need to keep me in to make sure that the antibiotics they are pumping me full of are indeed working, and they seem to think that I might not take their advice to heart and stay in bed to rest my ribs were they to release me. I find that absolutely outrageous.

Agent Woo and Dr. Lewis have come in to visit me a few times, which I greatly appreciate. They manage to take my mind off of being confined to bed and keep me from wondering too much about what is happening to Maximo. Especially Darcy (who has given me apparently special permission to drop the use of dr.) keeps me well occupied, listening to her very dramatic retellings of missions amongst gods and her work at S.W.O.R.D. (whom she is working with just to undermine, apparently) is insanely intriguing. I keep forgetting to pity myself when I listen to her. Another plus is that Darcy finds me pretty cool too.

Hayward came to visit me once. Our chat was short and curt, him wanting me to tell me everything about what happened with Maximo while I was in her cabin, and me being very passive (in my opinion) aggressive about the way he handled Maximo's arrest. After a few minutes of trying to get me to give him something he could actually use against Maximo, Hayward apparently had enough of me and stormed off.

Once or twice, I closed my eyes and tried telepathically finding Maximo, or rather, getting her to find me, but I remained alone in my head. Maybe it was, like she had told me, more difficult for her being surrounded by people and their thoughts to hear through the noise. Still, I somehow couldn't shake the strange feeling of not being told something. What that was became clear on the fourth, and final day at the hospital.

A doctor had come over to me to explain to me that they were (finally) discharging me, and tried to go over how I was supposed to continue my treatments at home, but I wasn't really listening, itching to get out of here. As I was walking out of the hospital, wearing clean clothes Darcy had kindly brought me the other day, my old, frankly rather smelly clothes in a clear bag under my arm, I walked past the corridor in which the two S.W.O.R.D. agents had been keeping guard, I noticed they were now gone. The room behind the closed door was now completely empty, no trace of its previous inhabitant anywhere to be found.

I wait outside of the hospital, looking around, wondering what on earth I am supposed to do now, when a black SUV pulls up in front of me, and the door in the back opens, revealing Agent Woo sitting in the back. He motions to me to get in, which I do, but not nearly as effortlessly as I would have done before my encounter with Maximo.

"Where are we going?" I question Agent Woo as the driver in the front slams on the gas and the car jolts forward, quickly leaving the hospital behind.

"Home." Agent Woo says and I turn to look at him properly.

"What? We're leaving? But -" I begin and he shakes his head.

"We're done here. We did our job."

"We did... what? But, Maximo?" I'm utterly confused.

"Maximo has been apprehended and has been brought back already." Agent Woo says solemnly. I stare at him for a second, then look out of the tinted window, feeling oddly overlooked, for some reason. It was me who got to Maximo, or did everyone just forget about that? Without me managing to put those cuffs on her she would still be galavanting around somewhere in the Transian wilderness.

"Look, you did good. But the FBI wants us back now. You need to get better and I've already been assigned to another case." Agent Woo sighs, quite possibly sounding just as disappointed as I feel.

And so, we travel in almost complete silence back to the US. This time, we aren't met by any private jets, but have to travel the cumbersome journey from the small airport in Transia to Budapest, from where we fly to Paris and then to D.C. Agent Woo tries to make some small talk during our journey, but the conversation just doesn't flow, and he seems relieved when we part ways at Dulles airport.

I am apparently requested to make an appearance at the FBI's headquarters the following Monday. I am not given any particular reason for this honor, but I know they want to hear directly from me what actually went down by the foot of Mount Wundagore. Come into contact with an enhanced individual once and suddenly you matter. And so, I make my way to the hotel I've been booked a room in and try settling down, feeling uneasy, still. Due to the time difference, I'm not able to find sleep during the entire night, tossing and turning in the bed, turning the TV on and off. At least the medicines I'm on keep me from really feeling much discomfort, and they keep my brain in a lovely fog.

And so the next few days continue in a sort of twilight zone. I do not exit my hotel room once, becoming fast friends with the young gentleman who is tasked with bringing me my dinners up to the room. Finally, Monday rolls around. I'm lying on my bed, hands and legs stretched out so that I am covering the entire surface area of the bed when the alarm goes off in vain. I get dressed in a new suit I've had delivered. To my surprise, it fits me almost perfectly. Nothing I ever order online actually fits me. The only issue I have is getting the arm with the cast through the sleeves, which I quickly abandon and just throw the jacket over my shoulders.

The drive to headquarters is short, my Uber driver chatting at me the entire ride while I just "umm" and "aah" in response. I make my way through security (which proves to take slightly longer as I set off the metal detectors), and take the elevators up to the fifth floor amongst tired-looking people in suits.

"Step in, agent." A very clean-shaven man pokes his head through the doors I've been anxiously waiting in front.

"Thank you." I nod to him as I walk into a long room with a long table in the middle, a host of men in suits sitting all around it at the end furthest away.

I read the room, and sit down at one end of the table. They all look at me, obviously analyzing me, gauging how well I correspond to my file in the flesh.

"Hope your travels went smoothly." The eldest of the bunch breaks the silence.

"Yes, thank you, sir." I reply stily. I have always been awkward around my superiors.

"Good, good." He says, shuffling through some papers in front of him.

"Now, we have heard from Agent Woo about what when down in Transia with S.W.O.R.D. and Wanda Maximo."

"And now you want my side of events. I've already told both Hayward and Agent Woo everything I have got to say, I don't have anything to add. Sir." I add, finishing his thought for him.

The agent looks up at me from his papers, slightly surprised. The other agents just sit there, looking at me, which makes me rather self-conscious.

"No." He says, tilting his head which reminds me of Maximo. "We have read and received your report. That is all fine. You are the one who has the most insight on Maximo, so we want you to continue on the case."

I look around, slightly confused. "I'm sorry, I was under the impression that the case was closed."

"Certainly not. We have agents working together with a team of lawyers; they're putting together a lawsuit for the United States government against Maximo."

"And you want me to, what? Snitch on Maximo?" I ask the man, frowning my brows.

"Snitch?" He repeats, studying me. "You are an agent working for the FBI, and you are to help us put forth a case against Maximo. That is your duty."

I open my mouth, and close it again, not knowing what to say. I know my duty, but I somehow thought I would be done with Maximo. Trying to get her indicted doesn't sit right with me, instinctually.

Maximo on paper and the Maximo I now know are two completely different people.

"Agent," The elderly agent speaks up, returning my attention to him. "I am aware of your history, and am appreciative of the commitment you have shown the Bureau. Handling this case well will certainly do your career good. I can tell you are a driven young agent. This is the right next step to take."

"I appreciate your comments, sir, but I respectfully feel like I am too personally invested in this case. I owe Maximo my life." I tell him, pushing myself to stand.

"As far as I can tell, she owes you hers." The man who opened the door for me says and looks at my arm. "And despite, didn't she give you that?"

I open my mouth to answer, but am thankfully interrupted by the older agent.

"This is not up for debate. Your helicopter is waiting for you on the helipad. I expect timely reports directly from you on my desk. Dismissed."

And with that, I numbly walk out of the meeting.

A/N: Right, kind of a filler chapter (although I don't like to call any chapters that since everything takes the story forward)... We've got a few slightly slower chapters coming up, but I have a feeling this is going to speed up pretty drastically soon... eek... Anyway, I hope you've liked it so far! If you have any suggestions or anything feel free to drop a comment or send me a cheeky message ;)

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