

## Chapter 27

The ride to the Ra had taken a good few hours, so I'm not too worried about trying to spot land, or anything other than the rolling waves far below. The FBI has thankfully invested in some rather nice helicopters, so there's not much to do in terms of keeping it flying: the autopilot is taking care of most everything. I've let myself sink down low in my seat, feeling heavy and tired as ever, everything that has just happened. There's a slight annoying pounding in my head, and I feel famished. I look over to my side where Wanda is sitting. She's pulled her knees up to her chest, her arms wrapped around her knees protectively as she rests her head back. The lights from the various buttons and knobs on the dashboard in front of us are reflected like a multitude of rainbow-colored stars in her dewy eyes. She looks tired, her cheekbones creating dark shadows on her face, and I realize I have no clue when her last meal was.

I push myself up slightly and she looks over at me in silence. I begin looking around me in the unfamiliar crevices of the helicopter just like I did when I was looking for the manual earlier, which now lies discarded by my feet.

"What are you looking for?" Wanda asks so ly, her voice croaky. "We're not going down, are we?"

"No, no." I shake my head, my right hand finally closing around what I was looking for.

"Madame," I straighten up, holding two old protein bars in my hand, extending it towards Wanda who looks down at them, amused.

"Well, well." She smiles and takes one of the bars, looking down at it with a small smirk. "What a treat."

"Well, I don't know when you last ate, but I'm starving." I begin unwrapping my bar and Wanda hums appreciatively. "Plus, I bet the service wasn't this great last time you were busted out of the Ra."

Wanda lets out a little laugh. "No, this o icially beats last time."

"I'm glad." I take a bite and instantly gag, the protein bar landing by my feet. "What the fuck is that?"

Wanda bursts out laughing, a sound I've never heard before. I grimace and look over at her, her joy contagious as I start laughing too. My ribs ache dully and I force myself to calm down, my hand still on my ribs. Wanda's eyes flutter down to where I'm holding my ribs and she grows serious again and I find myself instantly missing the sound of her laughter.

"Are you ok?" She asks me looking somewhere between concerned and embarrassed.

"I'm fine." I brush her o .

"You know, I am really -"

"If you say sorry I am crashing this helicopter." I cut her o , rolling my eyes.

"What, why?"

"You've already apologized, and anyway, you were just trying to stop me from putting those on you." I nod at the shackles around her wrists.

"I can use magic with them on, but it's di icult." Wanda muses, looking down at the shackles, a frown on her face.

"Luckily, I know how to get them o ."

"You what?" Wanda starts, looking up at me as if I've just told her the most unbelievable thing. "Why?"

"Cause. I don't know how to get them o ." I shrug apologetically, teasing her slightly, which she notices and squints suspiciously.

"So how...?"

"I know who designed them." Wanda's face turns into a scowl. "Don't give me that look. She's a friend."

"A friend?" Wanda judgmentally asks and gives a twirl of one of the shackles just to emphasize whatever point she's trying to make.

"Do you consider me a friend?" I ask her and her expression softens slightly.

"I guess we are... friends." She says as if the word feels foreign on her tongue.

"And what did I try to do the first time I saw you?"

"Shoot me." Wanda smirks.

"There you go. I still might." I add, giving her a look, and she giggles.

"You can try."

"Shit, Olivia, it's not that I'm not happy to see you, but I've heard some quite honestly insane rumors-"

"Darcy, chill!" I laugh.

"No, no, last I heard you were sent o to talk to Maximo on the Ra and it's not like I was spying in, because I wasn't! But if I technically were to have, what the fuck happened?" Darcy loudly interrogates me as I try to shush her.

"I'll explain later!" I say in a whispered tone, trying to get her to calm down. "I just don't want to alarm you-"

"How did you even get in here!?"

"I have an extra- it doesn't matter!" I sigh, stepping in front of her to stop her from walking. She looks at me expectantly through her glasses. "Look, I need your help, well, someone else does, I just... please be calm when you walk into your o ice, ok?"

Darcy gives me an intrigued look, and for a second I'm doubting my plan, but then she gives in. "Ok, sheesh, what's with this intensity? Come on then, I want to see what you've got for me!"

I give her a look and step aside to let her enter her o ice which I've blocked her entrance to. She excitedly walks past me, long dark locks bouncing.

"What!?" She shrieks, coming to a complete stop, making me almost bump into her. I quickly try and close the door, hoping her shriek hasn't attracted any unwanted attention. "What!"

"Darcy, shh." I plead in vain, walking around her to join a slightly awkward-looking Wanda.

I give Wanda a reassuring nudge as I come to stand next to her. Wanda gives me a tight, forced smile. Darcy looks from me to Wanda and back again, her eyes bulging out of their sockets. For a moment I'm afraid they might pop out.

"How!?" Darcy asks me, not taking her eyes o Wanda, who now radiates discomfort.

"It's a very long story." I deflect tiredly. "I know you designed these-" I tap on one of the shackles. "Is there a way to get them o ?"

"Yes, of course, but..." Darcy begins, finally looking at me hesitantly.

"Can you do it?" I interrupt.

Darcy hesitates but then nods enthusiastically. "You know, Wanda, this is the second time I'm trying to bust you out of someplace."

Wanda tilts her head curiously as Darcy begins to toy around in some drawers, looking for god knows what.

"I was there, in Westview." Darcy casually mentions.

I feel Wanda go sti next to me. I look over and see that the blood has drained from her face as she looks at Darcy's back with empty eyes.

"What a shame it ended like it did, I did enjoy crashing into Hayward, though. The job took on a new meaning for me a er that."

Wanda blinks rapidly and swallows. I know I should probably steer the conversation away from Westview, but a part of me is curious. I've so very rarely heard Wanda mention it at all, and I still don't know the full story of what actually happened there. What I do know, is that there's more to the story than the reports I've read. I can't believe the woman standing next to me would have done all the things the report states.

"Aha! Here we go!" Darcy triumphantly exclaims, taking out a weird-looking object from one of the drawers. "Let me try this."

She walks up to Wanda, completely unaware of how her mood has shi ed completely. Wanda extends one hand out to Darcy, who begins toying with the object over the shackles.

"I'm so sorry about the Vision dude." Darcy says, completely unaware of how her words have the opposite e ect of what she's intending.

"How're the shackles coming along, Darcy?" I ask her.

"Oh, they're coming along. It's taking a minute, someone very smart designed these." She smiles at me, winking. "Anyway, how on earth are you two pals now?"

Sensing Wanda is not in a talkative mood, I take over, trying to cheer her up. "Well, you know me, I'm great at making friends wherever I go."

"Yeah, Hayward absolutely fell in love with you." Darcy laughs.

"What?" Wanda asks, seemingly jolted out of her thoughts.

"Oh yeah, big time." Darcy says, a wide grin on her face. "First time they laid eyes upon each other..."

"Darcy, come on." I shake my head, chuckling.

"No, that's when I knew we would get along." Darcy says, now more seriously. "I'll like anyone who'll stick it to that bastard."

"High standards, huh?" I roll my eyes.

"One down!" Darcy exclaims as there's a so click, and the black metal opens up. Wanda instantly removes her hand, as if scared it'll close up around her wrist again.

"Look at that." I say, impressed, looking at Wanda's naked wrist with glee, and some sense of relief. As soon as they're o her, I can stop feeling guilty, and maybe I'll go back to my normal life. Wanda suddenly looks at me with a weird look. I frown and tilt my head questioningly. She looks into my eyes for a second, then swallows and looks back down at her other hand now in Darcy's grip.

"So, what's the plan?" Darcy asks us.

"Huh?"

"The plan! You escaped the Ra , both of you. You're likely not to be le alone for a while a er that stunt." Darcy explains.

"Oh, right." I say, not even having thought of that. I look up at Wanda, but she doesn't meet my eyes. "Eh, I don't know. I honestly wasn't even planning on getting her out of there. It just... happened."

"Right, busting out of the Ra just happened." Darcy looks at me poignantly.

"Yeah, I mean... wasn't easy but Wanda somehow could still access her powers and..." I shrug, still noticing Wanda is keeping an unusually focused look on her hand.

"Hm. That's impressive. These aren't the weakest things." Darcy explains, impressed.

The second of the shackles finally pops open just like the first one, and Wanda is finally free. Darcy looks up, beaming, but her expression falters slightly when she sees the look on Wanda's face, who is already backing away. I exchange a look with Darcy and follow Wanda, stopping her by lightly putting a hand on her shoulder.

Wanda turns around, and meets me with a stoic expression. I instantly know something is wrong, but I can't understand what. She's finally free, what could be wrong now?

"Thank you." She says, looking at me, then at Darcy. "Both."

"Ugh, you're welcome?" Darcy says behind me.

"What's wrong?" I ask Wanda quietly, so that Darcy can't hear me (which I am certain she's trying hard to).

"Everything is fine." Wanda says. "Thank you."

She gives me a small smile before moving away from me, making my hand fall from her shoulder. And without saying anything else, she walks out of the o ice, just like that. Darcy and I exchange confused looks before I hurry a er Wanda, who has now gotten well down the hallway outside. She's walking brusquely, making me have to jog to catch up to her. Someone is walking in the opposite direction and stops and stares at Wanda. To my shock, all she does is twirl her hand, and a thin red wisp escapes, and the person freezes in place, letting her walk past without any trouble.

"Wanda, stop! Where are you going?" I ask a er her, but she neither answers nor makes any sign of noting my presence.

Wanda repeats whatever spell she cast on the first person a dozen more times, apparently not caring at all whether people know she's smack in the middle of a building with hundreds of agents who all see her as a threat.

"Wanda, oh my god, stop!" I yell, exasperated as we've now reached the main lobby, which is filled with people milling about.

To my surprise, Wanda actually stops and turns around to face me. Before I have the time to say or do anything, someone yells out:

"That's Wanda Maximo !"

And chaos ensues as everyone bumps into each other, trying to locate Wanda. I watch with horror as Wanda closes her eyes in concentration, and when she opens them the familiar red glow is present. She spreads her arms slightly, and a plume of red escapes her in all directions, hitting everyone in the vicinity, making them go still like puppets on loose strings.

I react instinctively, making the silvery mist appear in front of me, halting Wanda's magic before it has the chance to reach me and do whatever it is that it is doing to everyone else.

"What are you doing?" I ask Wanda with urgency, being completely at a loss.

"Letting you go back to your normal life." Wanda says, li ing one hand up and making a huge glass window explode.

I shield my face from the glass shards which ricochet everywhere, and Wanda pushes herself o the ground using her magic.

"Wait!" I yell before she has time to escape. Just for good measure, I let my own explosion of silver mist explode out of me, finding it easy to make the magic appear as I am desperate to keep Wanda near.

The world freezes, and Wanda doesn't. I jog up to where she's hovering a few feet o the ground and she looks down at me with almost indifference.

"What happened?" I ask her, out of breath.

"You warmed me, and now you've done your bit." She says, a fake air of helpmth in her voice.

"Excuse me?" I exclaim, shocked.

"I don't want to ruin anyone else's life." Wanda begins, which makes me laugh a mirthless laugh.

"Do you think you're ruining my life?"

"Well-"

"In case you haven't noticed, every decision I've made has been exactly that; mydecision." I tell her, feeling insulted.

"Maybe that is the problem." She says, confounding me even more.

I open my mouth to say something, but I have no idea what to say. Wanda gives me one last look, before she zooms towards the window.

"Wait, don't!" I yell, in my desperation sending out a ball of silver towards her, trying to stop her. She gracefully blocks it with her own magic, and then she's gone.

I run towards the window, looking out just in time to see her become smaller and smaller against the dark sky in D.C. until I can't make her out anymore. I let go of my magic, and all the people around me come back to life, and yet it feels like I'm still all alone.

A/N: Holy mother of... I finally got it written out! So so sorry for the long wait! I am not going to lie, this was a di icult one to write, I literally have no idea where this is going now lol.... any ideas, please? Haha...

Anywho, hope you liked it and I assure I am still writing this, just the updates might be a tad slower than you're used to.