

Chapter 29

"For the hundredth time - I don't know" I bang my head back against the cold white wall behind me.

"Surely-"

"For the hundredth and one time, I don't know." I shut my eyes, the harshness of the fluorescent lights making my head pound annoyingly, and I just wish I could lie down in a dark room.

"Agent, Olivia, if I may?" The man sitting opposite to me switches tactics as if I haven't been trained in exactly this. I hum out my agreement, knowing what he is aiming to do, just wishing he would get on with it if he indeed keeps insisting on being so bad at his job that he cannot tell that I am telling the truth. I, in fact, surprise, do not know where Wanda Maximo fucked off to so eloquently, fucking me over completely in the process.

"Olivia, how do you explain the glitches in the camera systems, both at headquarters and at the Ra?"

"Do I look like a mechanic?"

"Funny."

"Not really. Maybe you all need to put some money into surveillance. Seems rather lacking to me."

"What part seems lacking to you?" The man asks, and I can literally hear the gears turning in his head, trying to get an in, trying to be the one that figures this all out and leads them to capture Maximo again.

"Right, you have been at this for seven hours now. I cannot explain it to you. I don't know. If I knew, do you think I'd be sitting here? Do you think that if Maximo included me in her plans she would have let me behind? You've seen the tapes. She fucks off, and I'm here." I ramble, lying my head on the wall to look at the man in front of me, pleading with him to understand.

"How do you feel about that?" He asks and I frown, confused.

"How do I feel about what?"

"About being left behind."

I let out a joyless, cold laugh. "Being left behind - what, exactly?"

"I think you know exactly what I am talking about, Olivia."

I stare at the man for a while, his observation taking me by surprise. How exactly do I feel? Tired. Achy. Angry. Disappointed. Hurt. I quickly push aside those more... complex emotions. Sure, it sucks that I'm going to such great lengths to help Wanda out, I don't even get left with a thank you. Then again, maybe I don't deserve any thanks. I was, after all, the one who put Wanda in the Ra. Technically. Maybe through Wanda's eyes, I owed her and merely paid my debt. The thought makes anger well up in me anew. But what debt did I owe her? I was doing my job. I owed nothing to her, she could have left, fled, but she stayed. She stayed. A little voice, annoyingly reminiscent of Maximo, whispers to me. She stayed, made sure you didn't die, and got caught. You do owe her your life, snort. But she was the entire reason why my life needed saving, there was absolutely no need to snap my arm in half like a dry branch.

"Seems like there's a lot going on in your mind, Olivia." The man reminds me of his presence and I wet my lips, awkwardly realizing how long I was lost in my thoughts for. "What were you thinking about?"

"How nice it would be to be able to lie down, you know I haven't actually been horizontal in... can't even count how long!" I say, shifting in my seat. The man nods, as if understanding of my predicament, which makes me even more irritable.

"I'm just trying to do my job here."

"Which is what, exactly?" I snap.

"Do figure out what happened. How does someone under maximum security escape from the Ra, infiltrate headquarters, and escape, again." The man muses and crosses his arms, leaning back in his seat, examining me closely.

"You tell me."

"I wasn't there. You were."

"Touché." I give, nodding. "But, as I've been saying for these past, lovely, seven hours. I. Do. Not. Know."

"Well, if you don't know how you must know the why."

"And what gives you that impression?"

"I've heard you and Maximo got rather close. She even made sure you got treatment, knowingly getting arrested at the same time." His dark eyes fixate on mine, trying to gauge whether he's finally made any progress.

"Shocker, she's not a monster." I roll my eyes and hear him sigh.

"Did you think she was a monster, before you met her?"

"I presume I had the same opinion as anyone who hasn't met her." I shrug nonchalantly.

"And what opinion would that be?"

"You tell me." I repeat myself, and this time, he does actually humor me.

"I think she's extremely dangerous. I think she's proven to be unstable. I think it is unwise to let someone like her be completely autonomous. We've seen she isn't rational."

I pout, nodding. "Right."

"You did use the past tense, though, just there."

"What?"

"You said you presume you had the same opinion. Meaning your opinion has changed." I stare at him. Alright, he's not as bad as I've been painting him as. Still, I know exactly what he is doing. Trying to make it possible for them to use whatever I say against me.

"It would be foolish to cling on to opinions you form of someone before having any experience of the person." I say and he nods, agreeing.

"Certainly. How did your perspective shift?"

"I..." I begin, hesitantly. "People don't like to be around her. Who wants to be around someone who can read your mind, right? How could you trust someone like that? It's just... easier to stay away. That's what she wants to do, I think. Stay away from everyone so she doesn't get reminded of who she is."

The man continues looking at me, patiently waiting, and for some reason, I continue. "I think she's deeply hurt by that. And lonely. She has no one. But she does act with the best intentions in mind. She just... is backed into corners, sometimes."

"Is that what happened when you backed her into a corner?" The man asks, hinting at my broken arm.

"Well, we did sneak up on her in the middle of the night. I don't know many people who would take that in good stride."

"Do you think she's a bad person?"

"A bad person?" I repeat, surprised. "I don't think anyone is wholly bad."

"I could name a few." The man chuckles. "Do you think she shouldn't be detained?"

"I think she should answer for what she's done, but not in this way, no."

"So could she have convinced you to help her escape?" His statement makes me laugh.

"I don't know if you've familiarized yourself with me prior to walking into this room, detective, but there are not a lot of people who can convince me to do anything. I have told you this, I do not remember. I must have hit my head."

I smile a big, fake smile at the man. He sighs and gathers his papers, and I know I've won. They don't have anything on me. They cannot prove I voluntarily helped Maximo, and how could they prove she forced me?

"Alright, you know what?" The man says, standing up. "I don't have any more questions. Go back to your hotel, we'll keep you updated."

"Thank you so much. These were a lovely seven hours." I smile and he opens the door for me.

A week passes, uneventfully. I've returned to New York, and have been waiting around like a dog for its owner to return. My flat has seldom felt so big and empty. I don't get any updates on Maximo, which makes me antsy. I keep trying to check the internet for any news, but nothing. I even tried to return to work a few times, but I've been silently sent back home with excuses such as I need to rest or there are no cases for me at the moment (which I know is a lie, having read an article about the gasoline-spitting woman being back a few days ago). The gym doesn't do me much good, with my ribs still healing and my arm still being completely out of the game. Darcy came over once a few days ago, but didn't know anything more than I did, so her visit didn't bring me much in terms of closure. I couldn't even pretend to enjoy her company, which she caught on to pretty quickly. And so she left, leaving me to wallow in my own thoughts, which are company enough. And so the days pass, which turn into a week, which turns into two.

And I'm finally back at work. I try to return back to how it was before I left, but it's proving almost impossible. I feel people staring holes into the back of my head, but no one dares to ask me anything, and I know they're dying to. The work seems to have changed too. I'm having trouble concentrating and I find myself getting bored every ten minutes. Another week goes by, painfully slow, but finally, something breaks me out of my trance.

I'm sitting by my desk, pretending to work when in reality all I'm doing is browsing online with no clear idea what I am looking for. I'm currently watching a report on how unusually cool weather in Europe is messing with the growth of some crops. I'm not really paying attention, my eyes glazed over staring at my screen. The reporter is standing in front of an old church in some city that looks like it's been plucked straight out of history books, when something, or rather someone, catches my eye.

In the background, completely unaware of the camera, walks someone who makes me press pause on the video in a panic. I look closer, and indeed, one of the two women looks suspiciously like Maximo. She's blurry, wearing a baseball cap over long, reddish hair. I don't know if it is my paranoia, but I'm certain it is Maximo. I look around, but no one is paying me any attention at the moment. I grab a screenshot and send it off to one of the girls I'm close to at IT.

Then, I shut off my computer, grab my coat and bag and sneak off towards the basement. I keep my head down on the way, not making eye contact with anyone. Thankfully, no one seems interested in talking to me, and I make it to IT easily. Finding Felicity, I drop my stuff down and sit down next to her with a huff.

The older woman jumps slightly in her seat, taking off her headphones.

"I promise I was working!" She exclaims. "It's so good to see you again, Liv!"

"Yeah, you too Felicity." I say hurriedly. "Did you get my email?"

"Let me check." Felicity says, noticing my hurrying. "Yup, here it is. What do you want me to do with it?"

"Can you zoom in on that woman?" I ask, pointing at Maximo.

Felicity does, enhancing the picture. Wanda is wearing big, dark sunglasses shading her face, but it is unmistakably her.

"Is that-"

"That's perfect, Felicity, thank you so much!" I exclaim, grabbing my stuff and standing up, ready to leave. "Oh, and please keep this between us for now, yeah?"

"Sure thing." Felicity says, smiling warmly and I nod appreciatively at her.

I hurriedly make my way out of the building and out onto the busy New York street outside. I look around the street, hailing down a cab that comes screeching to a halt in front of me and I hop in, breathless.

"Where we off to, then?" The driver looks at me through the rearview mirror.

"JFK." I answer without thinking about it twice.

A/N: We're back! Over 2.6k reads, that's mad! Thanks to everyone sticking with this story! Did you notice we're back to calling Wanda by her last name...