

Chapter 33

"Wanda? Are you listening?" Agatha's voice brings me back from being lost in deep thought, miles away.

I look up from my lap, where my hands are fiddling with some old rings I've put back on. Agatha looks at me expectantly from across the dinner table I quickly fixed when we entered the cabin. The single source of light above our heads shines harshly on her face, making her features stronger, more powerful. Even the light is helping her appear more powerful. Her dark brows scrunch up as she regards me.

"Sorry?" I murmur, honestly having no idea what we're discussing now. We've been at this for what feels like hours. Honestly, I've not listened to most things Agatha has been warning me about, despite me wanting her here.

Agatha makes an exaggerated sigh, rolling her eyes and leaning back into her chair. It takes me back to my school days, back in Sokovia, when teachers would constantly sigh and roll their eyes at Pietro, who would be in trouble more often than not. For some reason, the teachers always had me join their lecturing Pietro, as if my presence would somehow help prevent him from being a trouble-maker. It never did help.

"Wanda, you need to concentrate if this is going to work," Agatha crosses her arms, her eyes fixed on me, most certainly analyzing my every little move, or lack of movement. I can faintly hear the murmurs of her thoughts, at times ticking more strongly and less strongly at times, but I try to ignore them just as much as I know she is trying to conceal them from me. I make a conscious effort to stop twiddling with my rings, and her mind switches slightly differently as she notices it.

"I am concentrating." I lie, trying to conjure the same passivity and tranquility Nat always tried to teach me. Agatha's eyes narrow.

"No, you're not. You sougnt me out, Wanda. I am only trying to help." I refrain slightly at her half-lie, but we both know I need her here, so I refrain from commenting. "Right, what was I saying?"

Agatha's eyebrows scrunch up as I hear the ticking of her thoughts trying to re-board whatever train of thought they were on before.

"Ah, right! At this point, you should be very careful with just exactly how you formulate your hex; now I know you just... feel your way."

I honestly try to pay attention, but there's a small tug at the back of my consciousness, my scarlet alerting me to something. I let myself broaden my mental awareness, brushing past countless simpler emotions and wants past Agatha, well outside of my cabin. I never tried to measure how far I could go, but whatever I felt a second ago must have moved further away from me, because I cannot distinguish any more complex thought patterns, which I've found set humans aside from animals, who often feel more like more straightforward emotions. I return to myself as I feel an especially strong annoyance radiate from Agatha.

"I am listening." I promise her and she looks slightly more placated.

"Hmm. So, at this point, your hex should be strong enough, but I will add another layer of grip to yours just in case, ok?" Agatha's tone signals she is finding teaching me this intensely tedious.

"Yes." I say just to appease her again, and her face is giving me a headache, can we take a break?"

"I thought you'd want to crack on." She regards me, looking slightly surprised. "I thought it would be easier to do this here, so far from anyone. You still do need to work on curving letting everyone in. It was most difficult traveling with you, you know. Getting splitting headaches each time you get overwhelmed is not right. Didn't our dear, mostly departed -bless their souls-Avengers help you with that at all?" I don't miss the slightly venomous tone she applies to her last sentence and I feel my scarlet threaten to surface to remove whatever is angering me.

"I did train." I tell her, not feeling like she is deserving to know more.

"Well, they truly did wonders." She says, and I don't need my powers to know she means the complete opposite. "Who helped you? Cannot have been Banner, I doubt he knows how to shut his brain o by any other means than becoming green. Good ole Rogers, bless him, just seems like there's not much there, does it?"

I know she is trying to rile me up, and it is working. I clench my fists in my lap, under the table so she won't notice. From the corner of my eyes I can see small threads of my scarlet appearing around my hands and I try to calm myself down, but she's still going.

"How about Romano, then? She might've actually done some good, pity she's not with us anymore. Probably could have kept you on a shorter leash and we would have been spared this lovely trip. And then there's Stark."

I feel my scarlet surge against my will and it erupts out of my clenched fists, the force of it making the innocent table go flying into the back wall with a loud crack. I feel Agatha's thoughts loudly, but she's managing to keep them hidden otherwise. She doesn't look the least bit surprised by my silent outburst. Instead, she looks pleased, which only serves to irritate me more and my scarlet hotly runs in my veins, still searching to relieve me of the source to my anger.

"Exactly my point, dear Wanda." Agatha says and crosses her legs triumphantly.

"And what point are you making?" I ask her, not bothering with my accent which Nat so diligently helped me mask.

"You cannot let your emotions get the best of you, not with this." Agatha looks at me like I am a child, barely able to comprehend or ascend to her level of awareness. I refrain from reminding her the only reason she's still herself and not Agnes, is because she's here to teach me not to recreate my past mistake, and she best not annoy me or who knows what I might do in my emotiona state.

"I am not." I say through gritted teeth.

"Miraculous!" Agatha brightly says and claps her hands, the loud sound harsh against the peacefulness I've come to associate with my cabin. Well, before S.W.O.R.D. At the thought of them, my scarlet stirs once more, but I manage to keep it hidden.

"Shall we do a small trial run, nothing insane, just to see how well you manage to merge your magic with mine?" Agatha proposes, her voice brighter at the concept of finally being allowed to cast a spell. I hesitate, fully aware of not being as advanced in the details as the woman sitting opposite of me, and that there is a chance of her one-upping me. My hesitation must have been clear to her, as a coy, pleased smile briefly crosses her face before she has the sense to hide it.

"You remember what we discussed in Romania, right? The whole point of going to visit some of my old friends, huh?" Agatha presses me and despite my worry, I relent and give her a curt nod, which she smiles brightly at. "Fantastic. Right then, stand up."

I do as she instructs, pushing my chair further back so that we are standing face to face in the middle of the room. Agatha never breaks eye contact and I feel a slight hesitation against her using magic, the feeling of my power, so omnipresent for so many years, and such a solace whilst such a curse being so painfully ripped out of me, leaving me bare still fresh in my memory. I force myself to take a deep breath, just like Clint used to have me do, trying to not sink into that feeling even deeper.

"You ready, then, little witch?" Agatha asks tauntingly and I tense up at her use of words. "This won't be, well, shouldn't be too difficult."

She turns around, picking up her chair and placing it in front of us. Then, she briskly walks past me into the kitchen, picking up my favorite mug, filling it with water, and then walks back, putting it down onto the chair. Happy with the placement, she takes a step back and looks up at me, excitement practically radiating o her.

"What, a weird game of musical chairs?" I ask her sarcastically.

"No, I want you to lie up the chair with me without spilling any water. This should be easy, we used to do this with little fledgling witches and they did it just fine. The Scarlet Witch should have no issues." Agatha taunts me again and it takes a lot of restraint to keep my hands from allowing some of my scarlet to show.

"The Scarlet Witch doesn't need any help."

"Well, that's not true, is it, Wanda? You came for me." Agatha smiles sweetly.

"Let's just go do it now. I don't need this game." I shake my head impatiently.

"No." Agatha instantly replies, completely serious now, regarding me closely. I unconsciously tilt my head, curious as to why she switched her emotions completely, her thoughts ticking furiously, anxiously. "I need to make sure you don't let your scarlet's you call it go wild, or it will kill us both. No one has tried this before."

"Okay, I will do it, once. Then, I want to go." I tell her, turning my attention to the unassuming chair and mug.

"Good. Slowly, up, then down." Agatha says, extending her hands out towards the chair, looking up expectantly, so I do the same. "On my count. 3. 2. 1. Now"

I summon my scarlet, which is quick to react due to being so close to the surface. It slips out of my hands towards the chair. I feel the chair as if I've just extended my two bare hands to touch it. I curl my fingers around the legs of the chair, seeing Agatha's purple hex do the same. As the hexes come into contact with each other I automatically push against the purple, the feeling pricking my fingers uncomfortably.

"Work with me, Wanda! Agatha reminds me, her brows furrowed in concentration.

I breathe out, taking a figurative step back, allowing Agatha's hex to coil itself around the chair's legs, mixing with my red hex. It's a strange feeling, but I allow it. It's oddly intimate.

"Good. Now up, slowly. Concentrate."

I feel Agatha's hex slowly begin to lie the chair and I slowly and carefully match her speed. It does take a surprising amount of concentration to work with her and not against her as my scarlet constantly pushes against me urging me to allow it to push Agatha away from us. Nevertheless, I keep it in check, my eyes glued on the chair which now slowly begins to rise o the floor. The mug sits still on top, the water only slightly moving.

"Good, Wanda." Agatha says and her hex tickles my fingers and I have to zero in on my scarlet which wants to fight back and push the strange power far away from me.

Then, I feel a strange, familiar feeling in the back of my head.

"Livvy?" I gasp, surprised, and my scarlet, confusing my surprise for fear quickly and forcefully pushes against Agatha's magic, wrapping itself around it and effectively smothering it into nothingness. The chair comes crashing down onto the floor, the mug slipping o and smashing against the hardwood floor, splashing it with water. Agatha hisses and jumps back as if burned.

"What happened!?" She loudly exclaims, wringing her hands against one another as if she's been stung.

"I—" I gasp, still shocked. "I thought... It felt..."

"What?" Agatha implores me to continue, but I'm utterly confused.

"I felt, but I couldn't have." I say, frowning, turning away from Agatha to look out of the window onto the darkening world outside.

"What did you feel?" I hear Agatha behind me, her thoughts tapping away furiously. "Who's Livvy?"

I frown, then shake my head to get rid of the sudden infringement of my thoughts. For a second, I was certain of having felt her presence, which now is so familiar to me, but as suddenly as I felt it, I am now alone again.

"It's... it's nothing." I say, turning back towards Agatha who surveils me with incredulity.

"Who did you feel?"

"No one. I'm sorry, it must have just been an animal outside." I got distracted." I say, not wanting to share with Agatha anything about Olivia.

Agatha narrows her eyes at me, clearly not believing me. I hear her thoughts again, but refrain from listening in deeper than the surface, which I feel is riddled with confusion and intrigue. It makes me uneasy.

"Can we just go, now? I can do it." I sigh anxiously.

"Are you certain?"

"I am." I say and my heart aches at how close I am. Finally.

"Alright. Where is it, then?" Agatha asks, her eyes twinkling.

"Not before it's done." I tell her and her mask briefly falters, revealing her dislike of me before she replaces the momentary truth.

"Alright."

I pull my cardigan closer around my body, having forgotten how cold it gets here when the sun stops the cold from taking over. Agatha is leading the way despite having told me that she's never been here before. I keep my hands tucked in my armpits, my exhale creating small clouds of white in front of me as the hot air mixes with the cold.

"Almost there, now." Agatha puts s, her breath labored from the climb.

I turn to look back down towards where we came from and can barely make out the dark silhouette of my cabin down below us in the valley. The last rays of sun hit my face but do nothing much to warm me up, too feeble to fight against the impending night. A shiver runs through me and it feels like nights spent outside with Pietro. The only difference now is my scarlet, keeping me from getting way too cold. I can feel it in me, lazily drifting through my veins, occasionally striding, always watchful, keeping me protected. As if knowing my thoughts, my scarlet feels like it almost playfully nudges if me.

Another so feels, but not from my scarlet. I frown, my eyes looking down into the valley. It's already fallen into the shadows' hold, and I cannot make anything out but the small dark silhouette of my cabin and the shimmering lake. I must be imagining things in my excited state.

She's not here.

You're her.

She's back at home.

Safe.

I breathe out so ly.

Safe from me.

She'll continue with her life and her friends and family. It crosses my mind that she never did talk about anyone in her life. All I saw was that horrible nightmare I tried to soothe away. I never did ask her about it. Somehow, I didn't feel like her pain was something I should be privy to. Pain is private. Pain is something you go through alone. No matter how anyone else tries, they won't understand. Tragedy is lonely. It's just as lonely as me, high up on this mountain with a woman who wouldn't hesitate to kill me should an opportunity arise. Take my scarlet away from me. My scarlet swirls in me. Me and my scarlet against the world. A small smile crosses my face at the thought of what is to come. Soon, it won't be just me and my scarlet. Soon, I'll have everyone back. My scarlet responds enthusiastically, warming me up enough to let me drop my arms from my lonely embrace.

"You coming?"

"Yes, sorry." I breathe out, turning back towards Agatha, who's noticed me stopping and is waiting for me a little while up the pine tree-lined path up the mountain.

I let Agatha lead us on for another ten minutes until she stops. Now, it's getting almost difficult to see in the murky hallway darkness. Agatha looks like a mysterious figure from children's fairytales Pietro would whisper to me at night when I couldn't sleep. She turns towards me, pale face looking ghostly white surrounded by her heavy dark hair, and I know I must look equally pale in the lack of light, my hair becoming close to a shade of brown without the golden lights of the sun. I miss my dark hair.

"We're here." Agatha whispers almost deferentially.

I look around. We've climbed up halfway up the mountain, and are standing on a bigger ledge. The trees have thinned out, giving us a fantastic view of the world below. Up here, I feel more separate from all of the lives down on earth, even more so now that I'm physically so far away. The air is clear and crisp, cold in my lungs, but my scarlet is active, without my prodding it, like it senses something bigger than us. My stomach tightens just as my chest constricts. My scarlet anxiously tries to surface to get rid of whatever makes me uneasy, but there's nothing there. It's just me.

"Are you going to stand there all night, or shall we get started? I'd personally like to get home someday. Instead of freezing my butt o on this mountain." I jump slightly, having forgotten Agatha.

"Let's start." I say, rolling my shoulders and quickly shaking the nerves out.

"Alright." Agatha gives me a thin smile, her thoughts buzzing more anxiously now too.

I breathe out and walk out further onto the ledge. My breath fogs up even more now in the dropping night temperature. I feel Agatha slightly behind me. The world below me is a dark, amorphous mess. Nothing matters, everything is so small, so far away.

"Concentrate on them. You know what to do." Agatha whispers behind me.

I take one last shallow breath before I close my eyes and lower all mental barriers. My scarlet triumphantly flows, my wrists warm up considerably, my hands tingling, a feeling not unlike the one when you finally warm up your frozen hands. My consciousness brushes against Agatha's, but I don't focus on it, letting myself expand beyond me, her, and into the void in front of me. My chest burns, from anxiety, or the power of my scarlet. I don't know.

"See them? Agatha urgently whispers from somewhere far away.

I'm no longer in my physical body. I can still feel everything my body feels; my cold feet against the frozen ground, my stomach, the bitter air biting my cheeks, but I am also beyond that. My scarlet grows increasingly hot as I let it free, crawling up my arms.

Pietro.

He rules my hair, playfully, carefully nudging my shoulder with his strong hand.

"You keep scowling like that you will end up looking like old Katalin."

"Katalin could make even you behave."

"Well, even so, she did have terrible wrinkles. I wonder what hid inside them." Pietro chuckles, his eyes twinkling with joy. "So you keep up your scowling, dear sister."

"And you keep that up, soon there will be no more women in Sokovia who haven't heard of Pietro Maximo."

"Sounds good to me." He laughs, his laugh warming me more than my scarlet ever could.

"I don't mean it like that." I hu.

"Don't worry my little witch, no one will ever take me away from you."

I gasp, the memory playing out without my asking for it. My heart hurts. I can't breathe. I feel warm tears stream down my cold cheeks. Before I've had the time to process the memory, another one takes over.

"If you decide to not feel anything anymore, how can you begin to comprehend when you've started healing?"

My Vision.

"I can't heal. I don't want to. Not without him."

He drapes a steady arm across my trembling shoulders. My eyes are brimming with tears, making him appear out of focus. He so by cups my face in his hand, and I let my head lean against his hand. He holds me up, his thumb brushing against my cheek.

"Everything heals, whether you want it, or not. I am afraid." He so ly says, his blue eyes holding mine, and I'm suddenly so tired.

"Where are the boys?" I ask, and for a second, his caring expression changes to one of slight, polite confusion, before a warm smile drapes across his face and I stop breathing.

"They're here. Right here with me. We're all just waiting for you."

"I don't know how to reach you. I can't feel you. Any of you." I choke, my scarlet burning unbearably hot underneath my skin.

"Yes, you can. Allow yourself to feel, Wanda." Vision says.

I furrow my brows, trying to do as he tells me. All I'm feeling is the burning of my skin as my scarlet flows unimpeded around me, out of me, everywhere.

I am faintly aware of something else near me and open my eyes, but I can't see anything. Everything is scarlet. I let out a surprised gasp. My body hurts from the power surging through it. I don't know if I am shaking, or the literal rock beneath my feet is shaking. Then, I can't even feel solid ground beneath me anymore, grounding me. My scarlet lies me up, leaving me hanging in midair as it surges out of me with a ferocity I've not felt, and I know it's trying to bring me the only peace I will know. Them.

Pietro.

My Vision.

My boys.

My entire being aches for them. My scarlet burns even hotter, and everything I know and have ever know is scarlet. Burning heat. Scorching power. My scarlet.

Something fights against the flow of energy. Something is taming the flames, like a cool river. My scarlet fights against it. It burns against the cool. The cool doesn't give. I don't know how much longer I can be scarlet. It's tearing at me, the heat unbearable. I can't move, I can't control it. I silently panic as the sensation of helplessness grows as my scarlet viciously takes everything.

Come back.

I try to quench the flames, but I can't. My muscles ache, even my bones ache. The cool surrounds me. My scarlet tries to slither around it, but the cold is there, everywhere.

You're alright.

Come back to me.

I want to scream out. Maybe I am. I can't. I can't go back. The cold presses in on my scarlet again, with more force. My scarlet still fights, refusing to give in when all I want is to give in.

Then, my vision flickers. For a second, there is some silver before my scarlet drowns it out in its displeased anger. Another flicker of silver. Gone. I'm going insane.

Pietro.

I am tired. Let me lay down in your arms as you shield me from the world.

I am sorry.

A flash of silver.

Vision.

A flash of scarlet. Of violet. Of silver. Of scarlet. Of darkness.

Come back to me.

I can't.

A shriek. Not mine. For a second, the scarlet in my vision lets up. Olivia. Olivia? Her face pained. Standing there, her hands dancing in pewter, surrounded by flames. Scarlet and violet.

A/N: That's a big boy! And a Wanda POV! Did you enjoy getting a bit more from her? Next chapter will be back to Olivia, but this was really fun to write! Hope you enjoyed it! x