Chapter 67

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The first thing I'm aware of is groaning. God, who or what is that? And might they be able to shut up? It's making my brain pound very uncomfortably against my cranium. Bang. bang. bang. The second thing I'm aware of is how parched I am, and how my body feels as though I've engaged in some medieval form of wrestling, every single inch of me feeling like it's been used as a punching bag The third thing I'm aware of is that the groaning is emanating from my very own vocal cords. I stop groaning immediately. I peel my eyes open, which proves rather uncomfortable as my usually very pleasant eyeballs feel as though someone has gone over them with some sandpaper. I instantly shut them again, the cold, bright light way too harsh for me right now, and also because if I could, I would prefer to stay blissfully blacked out for just a little while longer. I realize that I am lying on my right side on something that feels suspiciously like cold concrete. It has also managed to make my entire right arm go numb. I groan again just for the heck of it before I reposition my battered and tired self into a slouching, but nonetheless sitting, position. The act makes my brain knock against my skull with newfound vigor as needles travel through my arm which doesn't seem all too grateful for its newfound supply of fresh blood. This sucks. You know what sucks? Your complaining. I instantly recognize the sour voice of the Maximo witch in my head. My body is doused by warmth as she talks to me, and I'm also made aware of some of her own annoyance at her situation as her emotions rub against mine and I can't quite tell which annoyance belongs to me and which one to her. Get out. I hu and open my eyes again -attempt number two. This attempt proves more successful than the first one as I slowly adjust to my strange surroundings. The bright light is coming from a fluorescent tube of light up above my head. The coolness of the floor is indeed that of concrete, and I am in what e ectively could be described as a light grey prison cell. There is a dark grey steel door, and a mirror I can only presume is a one-way mirror. I have no way of knowing whether there are people watching me this very moment from behind the glass, however, I am not alone in the cell. Slumped against one of the four walls a little way from me, is none other than Maximo . She's sitting still, her head leaning back against the wall, e ectively exposing her neck and the heavy collar around it. Her chest rises slowly and falls slowly too as her perceptive wide eyes are trained on me. She must've woken up slightly before me, her body being able to fight o whatever we were injected with faster than mine due to her enhancements, I would assume. Maximo smiles a cracked smile and looks up at the ceiling. Her face almost matches the grey wall behind her in color, and yet the look somehow suits her, I notice, which slightly annoys me. I'm quite certain I don't look half as decent, and I'm not the one sporting a massive bruise on the side of my face. "What?" My voice is dry and cracked, slightly too loud for our environment, but I refuse to have her inside me if I can help it. I watch Maximo as she lets her smile fall slightly as she looks back at me, her gaze somehow too direct even though she's at least five meters away from me. "What's so funny?" I ask her as she raises a questioning eyebrow, the shadow of her smirk still on her face. "Nothing, really." Maximo sighs, her stupid smile still playing on her lips, her accent thicker than usual. She must be tired. "Well, it's something, and your smile is annoying me." I sulk, annoyed at me being in the exact same position as she is when I was supposed to be the one capturing Maximo . Why the hell am Ihere? "My smile is annoying you?" She repeats, making herself smile even wider. "Yes. Stop it." "I can't help it. Blame yourself." She chuckles and shi s slightly, turning to face me more. "St- why should I blame me?" I ask her, on the defensive. She better not try anything funny, I am definitely not in the mood. "Because you always make me smile, whether you like it or not." "What on earth are you on about?" I shake my head, an action I instantly come to regret. "I don't know. I guess this is kind of funny." Maximo gestures between us and around us, apparently having forgotten what descriptive words are. "Oh yes." I ironically agree. "The height of comedy. I hope this is broadcast to every American household!" Maximo shoots me a look, then snorts. "I can see the tagline already. Witch that never gets it right and girl who said yes to the wrong fucking job." I don't reply, watching Maximo for a second, before I decide I have to move or else I don't know what I'll do. I force myself up to stand, ignoring the groans of protests emanating from every single joint in my body. Maximo 's eyes are on me, I can feel them burning but I refuse to look at her. Watching her keeps making me more irritable and I'm not exactly feeling jovial to begin with. I decide to walk up to the door. I examine it silently, then push at it in a hopeless and rather fruitless attempt at opening it, earning nothing but a chuckle from behind my shoulder. I shut my eyes, biting the inside of my cheek. Ignore her. 'Did you expect them to toss us in here and just leave the door open for us to walk out?" Maximo sneers and I breathe out slowly, counting silently to five. "First of all-" I begin, my voice steady and calm, turning around to face the now standing witch. "There is no us. There is me, and there is you." Maximo tilts her head slightly, looking nothing but amused, but I continue, admirably holding onto my new peaceful state of mind. "Second of all, I am not supposed to be in here with you, witch." Maximo smiles wider, her eyes gleaming. I hu, not finding her amusement enjoyable in the slightest. " What?" I groan exasperated between gritted teeth. "You're just... so..." Maximo shakes her head. "We've been here before, hun." "Hun?" I scrunch up my face. "Well, hun,I think you've got me confused with someone else because we have definitely not been here before." "Not here,literally, dumbass." Maximo chuckles slightly, rolling her eyes as she casually walks up to me. Just as she's coming to stand in front of me she dips her shoulder slightly and makes a twirl, coming to lean against the door behind me. I turn, stillannoyed, facing the smug witch. She's casually leaning against the steel door, gnawing on her bottom lip, watching me curiously. I take a deep breath, willing myself to stay calm. I doubt Hydra would take the news of me beating their prized possession black and blue very kindly. Instead, I plaster on a fake smile as I place a hand onto the door next to Maximo 's face, leaning in slightly, earning a slightly surprised look from Maximo as I close the distance between us. "Look," I begin, my voice silky sweet. "I'm not interested in your games, witch. I suggest you keep to your side of the room, and I'll keep to mine until I'm let out and we'll both walk out of here just as happy as ever, capiche?" Maximo pouts slightly, still biting at her lip as though she's trying to solve a particularly di icult riddle. Her eyes never leave mine as I talk, my proximity unfortunately not seemingly threatening to her at all. When I've finished talking I stay hovering in front of her, determined not to be the first one to back down. Maximo releases a breath I didn't notice she was holding in before her tongue darts out to wet her lips. "Humph." She exhales. "I was kind of enjoying this." "That makes one." I tell her dryly, starting to lean away from her. Maximo suddenly goes to grab my shirt by the collar, and I react by instantly grabbing hold of her wrists over her cu s, ready for a fight. Maximo 's mouth opens slightly, her lips parting in a silent inhale. We're locked in place, both of us waiting for the other to make the first move. I notice Maximo 's face doesn't have a trace of amusement le to read, instead her eyes meet mine with a new sense of urgency. "Livvy, please, you have to fight it." She whispers quickly, still holding me in place by my shirt. "Let me go." I whisper back but she just blinks. I could easily count each and every one of her dark lashes. "Never. We've done this once and we can do this again. Honey, I-" "What on earth are you on about? Let me-" "Just listen to me!" Maximo frustratedly pulls me even closer, her face mere centimeters away from mine. "Livvy, I can't go through this again. I can't. I can't." Her eyes glisten with unshed tears as she practically pleads. I stay frozen in place, completely taken aback by this sudden change in her. "Please fight it, I know you're there, baby." She pauses. "I. See. You." "Excuse me?" I stutter, utterly confused. "I don't know what you're -" 🧃 Maximo lets out a frustrated little growl as she's clearly not getting where she wants to fast enough. Her eyes dart around the room until they land on my face again and she pulls me forward and I'm too shaken to react quick enough. Her lips crash onto mine. She tastes salty, and I realize it's because she's crying. I fumble for a second, my brain apparently working at half-speed. Maximo kisses me urgently, nothing there but desperation. My eyes are wide open as hers are shut tight, her eyebrows pulled together into a frown. I finally find my strength again and push her away, hard. She crashes back onto the door with a hollow bang!Her teary eyes fly open in surprise and she lets out a little gasp. "What the fuck!" I shout at her and a big, fat tear falls o her eyelashes as she squeezes her eyes shut. "Liv-" "No!" I cut her o, backing away. "You stop whatever it is you're trying to do, witch! I am not falling for your tricks and I'm definitely not this Livvy you keep calling me!" I back away, turning around in a small circle, feeling trapped within the small cell, and with her right there. "Who the fuck do you think you are, then, huh!?" Maximo shouts back at me, her voice shrill and I whirl around to face her. "So help me god if you call yourself that stupid name they gave you!" I open my mouth to respond but close it again like a goldfish as no words come to me. I'm blank. 'Exactly! That's not you!" Maximo takes a few steps towards me, forcing me to back away. "It's not you, it's them! It's always them! I'm not letting them take you from me too. They've taken enough, Livvy. I can't give them anything else. It's not you." "But you are theirs." I tell her, my back hitting the wall as I back away. "No, I'm not. I never was. And neither are you. But I can't do this alone, I need you! Maximo is right there again, right in front of me, su ocating me. And yet I let her place her hands on either side of my face, right below my ears, holding me in place as her green eyes stare deep into mine, her hands so. "Come back to me, please." She croaks out and before I get to stop her she kisses me again, this time her lips so ly brushing against mine. I go to push her away, but something unknown stirs deep in my stomach, and the motion never comes to be. I frown against the kiss,

just standing there as Maximo presses herself closer to me, my back pressing against the cold, unyielding wall, juxtaposing her warm, so body pressing against my front. I don't kiss her back, and yet I almost feel like I should, which I can't comprehend. As my heart beats faster it equally feels like it's beating slower, and a million thoughts race through my head but I can't grasp at a single one to make it stay and make sense of it.

I finally push Maximo o me, but this time around I don't exude any

to see if I can't find any answers in their greenery. Maximo obliges,

parted, her cheeks finally having regained some color.

else as her thumb strokes across my cheek.

"I know, love." She smiles sadly.

her eyes dutifully holding mine as she so ly breathes, her lips slightly

"I don't- understand." I quietly whisper, more to myself than anyone

I go to speak but she lets out a little whimper and then she's thrown

her arms around me in a one-sided hug. I stand there, sti as a board

as she nuzzles her face into the crook of my neck, her so red hair

tickling the side of my face. My heart beats wildly against my chest,

but I'm confused. I half want to grab her by the shoulders and throw

her into the furthest wall and place my hands on her neck and watch

limply against me. She whispers something but I can't make out what

it is because just then the door to the cell swings open with a crash.

the collar drain from her eyes or I want to... what? Hug her back?

Maximo tightens her arms around me, her body almost hanging

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force, I just press her far enough back to be able to look into her eyes,

Maximo jumps slightly and lets go of me and I shu le a few steps to the side, getting away from her, my eyes trained on the door where two armed guards have just entered, followed by the woman, Strucker, or what did Agatha call her? "Hope I'm not interrupting anything?" She says, looking exactly like she's hoping the opposite. "No." I say and her eyes land on me. "Why am I here?" "Patience, Soldat." She waves me o , her cold eyes returning upon

Maximo, who looks completely frozen in place. "I do apologize for

Maximo hu s disbelievingly and I must admit I'm with her on this

one. The Strucker woman smiles understandingly at Maximo, and I

"I doubt you would have heard me out on your own volition given the

chance, Wanda." Strucker says and Maximo lets out a short, hollow

the way you two were brought here, it's not how I would have

preferred it..."

laugh.

wonder what their history is.

"You're right there." She coolly says, her accent thick. "Let us go now and I'll leave you unharmed." "Oh, Wanda, please!" Strucker laughs a similar, mirthless laugh to Maximo 's. "You know just as well as I do Hydra won't let you go." "What do you want with me?" Maximo tiredly asks, and I glance over at her. She's hugging herself, looking smaller than usual and for a moment I falter in my belief that she is as dangerous as I've been told.

"That-" Strucker begins, loudly. "We shall talk about later. Now, I

two guards enter carrying two trays of what I can only assume is

Strucker turns around and I hurry forward but the guards block my

way, stepping in between me and Strucker. Trucker turns around,

looking mildly surprised. I try to scramble my thoughts together.

"Ma'am, I- I'm confused. My mission was to retrieve your asset. You

Hydra's idea of food. "And... catch up."

want you to rest. Eat-" As she speaks she steps slightly to the side and

have her-" I gesture back towards Maximo . "Why am I in here with her?" "You have done well, and for that Hydra thanks you." The woman smiles and I feel the pit of my stomach sink, knowing she's not done with me. "Did you not ever wonder why you? Why didn't we send the Winter Soldier, or someone else?" "|-" "When you touched what you call the mist back on the Ra , you set in

motion a plan I didn't ever think would work. But you,you made it

woman adds, looking behind me over my shoulder. "That mist was

never intended for you, and the minute you touched it you declared

yourself Hydra's. There's a new dawn fast approaching, my dear, and

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you and Maximo will be the ones to bring it upon the rest of the

world. Hail Hydra."

Wanda can be funny

work. You're bound with our little creation -both of them." The

"Hail Hydra." The guards echo and the woman smiles a toothless smile. "I will see you soon." And with that, she turns around and walks away through the cool corridor. I push against the guards, but they easily push me backward. I stumble slightly and they exit, closing the door of the cell with a thud that echoes in the cell. I stand, unmoving, staring at the door, my brain trying to work its way through everything I was just told.

A/N: what on earth hydra :0 also idk about you but why is Wanda

being snarky so funny to me lol might just let Livvy stay like this so

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