

Chapter 77

(you're going to be very pleased with me.)

The small cabin feels exactly the same as it did the last time Wanda and I were here, all that time ago, it feels like. It has somehow retained all of its gloomy, unwelcoming nature whilst somehow, at the same time, almost seeming as though it wants to protect its inhabitants from the world outside. How something so seemingly unpleasant and uncared for can make me feel the complete opposite of that is still something I can't quite understand. It makes me feel at odds with myself. I'm comfortable, and yet I feel on edge.

At first, when Wanda opened that door for me and we stepped into the small wooden structure, it felt as though we actually have stepped back in time again. It seems like mere hours ago that I agreed to try to bring us back in time to help change the fate of her family, and yet, it also seems like who we were then are two people who don't exist anymore. It's not that we've just changed. It's not that we've grown or evolved. It's much more than that.

As soon as we stepped through the threshold I cast a glance at Wanda, trying to gauge her reaction. As soon as my foot stepped through the door it felt like I was brought back and never really left, but Wanda didn't show a sign of feeling the same. It used to be so easy to read her, but just then, I could not have wagered a guess as to what she was thinking. She did bring us here, however, she might have seen the cabin in my memories. It was impossible to tell. Her eyes, dark in the lack of light, moved across the cabin, her expression vacant. I so wanted to ask her, or to tell her it will come back, that I was here for her, whatever she needed, but I kept quiet, her pain forever etched on my heart. My words seemed insignificant to weigh against all that she lost, because of me. I'm not even sure she's still fully comprehended that it is all my fault. And so the guilt weighing down on me I caved.

And that vacant, empty Wanda was the last I've seen of her. I've not had the chance to grow a pair and ask her since she's been cooped up in the bedroom, not making a sound except for slamming the door shut a few times for the past few, long hours. She might be sleeping. She might be crying or she might be just sitting there, staring emptily at the wall. I wouldn't know. Time always seemed to move differently in the cabin with her on the other side of that wall. Time something we seem to always run out of, her and me. A funny joke, it seems, that time is the one thing we don't have even though I'm supposed to be able to move through time. I still don't understand how or why I can't do it now, when all I want so desperately is to take us back to before it happened. Time.

Space continue musing as I scoot slightly further down on my favorite couch, looking through the dusty window at the sprawling, endless trees, slightly swaying like they're dancing to a silent song in the breeze. The silence must make me oddly introspective. I know that just as the vastness of untouched landscape surrounding us outside the cabin, that same space that is what I also need to learn to give Wanda. I glance over at the untouched cup of tea outside of her door, sighing softly. I suck at comforting. Lately, it feels like I've sucked at most everything. It's hard to remember one win I've had.

I turn my head to try to summon the strength to continue reading that stupid book in Hungarian I once started. It lies there, open, on the old rickety table, taunting me. I could just reach out and grab it. But it seems as though I've lost control of my limbs. And so I just lay there, helplessly staring at the book, too lazy to do anything about my predicament. Maybe if I had Wanda's powers I could reach it and then would read it. Maybe.

The hours tick by and I barely move. Instead, I lay there, watching the stars outside wander across the night sky, so steadfast in their course. Always the same path, and always the same conclusion. Wanda is as unsurprising as the stars, staying in her bedroom. I ache to go to her, wanting nothing more than to at the least just sit next to her in silence as we've done so many times before, but it feels wrong now, a task as mammoth as climbing to the top of Mount Wundsgore.

But as the night stretches on, seemingly never-ending, my sleep eludes me and I'm left staring at nothing. My body feels heavy and aching, but my mind cannot seem to switch off. I am forced to instead relive every single embarrassing moment of my life, filling me with regret and absolutely no will of doing anything remotely brave ever again. I briefly wonder what Hydra are doing at this moment, with that data they stole. I wonder if the task force ever got out of Stark's facility. I hope not. If they did, Strucker must be having a much better night than I am, wherever she is.

My thoughts wander back to the past. Wanda and I left Stark's Tower so abruptly, I never had a chance to even think of the ramifications our time there could have. So far, nothing seems too out of sorts, but then again, I am in a cabin in the middle of nowhere. I wouldn't exactly know if the world had been turned upside down. But I can't shake the gnawing feeling deep down that we've done something wrong, that I've forgotten about something. Naturally, I cannot for the love of god think of what that could be.

I finally have enough of lying on the couch in a ball of anxiety, so I get up and realize that I'm still wearing those clothes Hydra gave me. I look down at myself, crinkling up my nose in disgust. There's old, dried blood smattered all over my left side, and I feel suddenly entirely disgusting and tainted. I hop off the couch, my muscles tight and tense, my heart beating quickly. I need these clothes off me. As soon as possible. I begin removing the dirty, smelly clothes, trying to not imagine that guard standing in a corner of the cabin, just watching me. I feel uncomfortable and I want to burn my clothes, but feel like Wanda might not take to it too well if I started a fire outside of her window.

Instead, I get rid of every last piece of clothing, wanting to be rid of anything that could remind me of Hydra, resolving to just kicking the clothes away into a corner of the room. Then, I am left standing there, naked as the day I was born. I instantly feel slightly cleaner without Hydra's clothes on me. The air in the cabin is slightly chilly so I shiver slightly, feeling cold, but at least slightly more myself, as I tiptoe across the small space to the drawer I know Wanda stacks some old shirts I might borrow.

"Shit!" A very familiar voice suddenly breaks the silence and a small crash of something being knocked over follows.

I let out a startled yelp, my heart trying to break free of my ribcage and escape into the night. I swirl around to see Wanda coming out of her room, having just knocked over the cup of cold tea standing in front of her door. There's no light emanating from the bedroom, so Wanda looks like a black and white figure in the dim light, only her hair up in a messy bun giving off the slightest tint of orange. I notice she's changed into sweats and a long, favorite cardigan of hers.

Wanda looks up at the sound of my yelp, her eyes catching the light of the stars outside and they twinkle as she quickly glances me up and down, her eyes round as she gasps silently, which makes me suddenly realize that I am utterly naked. And Wanda is standing there, staring at me.

"Sorry."

"Oh my god." Wanda and I both exclaim at the same time. My cheeks feel like they are burning up and I look around in a panic for something to cover myself up with.

This is not happening.

Wanda makes a weird sound that makes it sound like she's choking and she twirls around, her hands going up to her face as she's facing the other way. My heart beats frantically against my chest and I swear silently.

"There's nothing to wear." I croak out in pure embarrassment, lying completely as I haven't even gotten to examine the drawer of old clothes, but my mind has decided to go completely blank, only being able to repeat the fact that I am naked. And Wanda is standing right there. And oh, I am naked.

Wanda makes another awkward sound and her left hand makes a small gesture in the air and that's that, I'm suddenly wearing sweats and a hoodie, the very much real fabric instantly shielding me from the nippy air, weighing down on me softly. I let out a shaky exhale, my cheeks still burning as Wanda slowly turns around, her eyes instantly looking at my body. I could swear her cheeks are rosy too and she looks like she's just witnessed someone die. Ok, slightly rude

"I - I couldn't - it was -" I stutter awkwardly as Wanda smiles an awkward smile, bending over to pick up the rogue mug by her feet, pretending like she's not just seen everything she wasn't supposed to see.

"I thought you might've - but I didn't know -" I try to explain the mug and why it was left right outside of her door to her as she looks at me again with that small awkward smile.

"Ugh, thanks for, er, these." I indicate at my clothes and Wanda's eyes snap down to my body and then she looks away again in embarrassment, beginning to walk towards the kitchen and I look up at the ceiling, wanting to evaporate into thin air.

"I swear I wasn't just - eh, walking around naked." I croak out and Wanda lets out a little puff of air, her back towards me.

"I just - you hadn't come out - I thought I'd change."

"It's okay, Olivia." Wanda finally interrupts me, turning around to look at me, leaning back against the counter behind her. She smiles a small smile, her cheeks still pink. I try to smile back to show her I'm totally chill, but it's suddenly very difficult to smile like a normal person. This was definitely not how I thought she would see me naked - fuck

I watch Wanda tilt her head slightly, her lips curling downward slightly in a suppressed smile as she watches me, her eyes as ever feeling like they can see right through me, and now she doesn't even need to imagine - Oh my god, I need to stop!

"Sorry 'bout the tea." I mumble, trying to distract her as her grin widens against her will and I don't have to guess whether she's hearing my inner monologue or not.

"It's okay." She repeats her earlier words, her voice low, which somehow makes my stupid thoughts turn to focus on how good she looks in this very moment, her skin slightly warmed up by the lone small tale light I've got on next to the couch, her eyes dark and unreadable. My attention makes Wanda clear her throat slightly, blinking a couple of times, and then she turns away from me, fidgeting about with something on the counter, her cardigan falling off her shoulder slightly. I keep myself from walking over to her, having to remind myself she's not my Wanda, anything funny. Why I'm even thinking like this is a mystery that just happens beats me. The dichotomy of what I want to do and what I know I can't do makes me feel even more awkward, so I just end up standing there, watching her mutely.

Wanda twirls her fingers in a fluid little motion, and her mug starts steaming. She turns around to face me, now holding the steaming mug between her hands. She notices me staring and looks down at her mug. I mentally kick myself for being so awkward. Might be the lack of sleep or having eaten that stupid green apple that's making me more dense than usual.

"You want some?" Wanda mumbles, probably out of pure politeness and the want to remove herself from the situation, not looking at me at all.

I shake my head, only then to realize she can't see me. "Oh, no. Thanks."

Wow, way to be casual, Liv, bite my cheek, feeling the awkwardness build between Wanda and me, and then she looks at me with a look up.

"Er, do you -" I hear myself speak out, making Wanda look up expectantly, my voice trying to cut through that thick air between us. "Well, have to follow through now? Do you want to sit for a while? I, uh, can't really sleep."

I manage to grimace some sort of smile and Wanda seems to actually consider it, her lips parting slightly as she considers me. I begin to suspect she's going to ignore me and return to her room in silence but then she nods slightly and the knot in my stomach untightens slightly.

I backtrack a couple of steps as Wanda silently approaches, her eyes focusing on the mug in front of her so she doesn't have to look at me. I drop down on one end of the couch, pulling my knees up to my chest, hugging myself, trying to forget the image of her face as she saw me naked. Focus, Liv, think of something. Anything else. Oh my god, why is that the only thing you can think of?

Wanda hesitates slightly by the couch, looking up at me and I instantly look down at my knees, pretending as though I find them intensely fascinating. I give it a second, then I glance back at Wanda. She pouts slightly, then she slowly sits down on the other end of the couch, as far away from me as possible. She pulls up her legs, too, settling her mug on her knees. Her lips form a small 'o' as she blows on her tea.

Silence settles between us again. I don't know if it's awkward, or if it's just me making it awkward. Wanda makes a little face, scrunching up her nose, one I'm not sure she even realizes she's making. In either case, she looks adorable.

"Did you get some sleep?" I awkwardly try to get the conversation going, wishing anything to break the silence and thus stop my brain from doing what it's doing.

Wanda tilts her head slightly, pondering my question. Her eyebrows furrow slightly and she takes a deep breath, as if I've just asked her what her biggest regret in life is instead of the very simple question of did she sleep.

"No." She finally settles on, not really being of any help, seemingly not too interested in having a conversation. I sigh.

"Right." I say and she glances up at me quickly before returning her focus on her tea.

We fall back into an awkward silence. I try to remember if it was this awkward during those first few times we interacted way back before everything and we didn't know each other, but I can't recall. I do remember being rather loopy because of my injury. And I guess it is fruitless to compare - back then we didn't know each other, now, I know her but she doesn't know me, and yet there's all that history.

I notice Wanda's chewing on her bottom lip, a telltale sign whether she's thinking about something. I wait for a minute, wondering why or not she'll offer it up herself, but she doesn't. I try to not press her too much, but I can't help the words from spilling out my mouth.

"What are you thinking about?"

Wanda stays silent for a little while longer, her lip trapped between her teeth, even as a sly smile starts spreading across her face and her sparkling green eyes slowly meet mine, sending my heart on a little rollercoaster ride.

"I'm wondering what you would do if I unmagicked your clothes." She says, her grin spreading and I feel my blush creep up my neck to settle probably very visibly on my cheeks.

A/N: Hey hey hey, happy February and Monday! This was kind of funny, don'tcha think? Funny, the word you all would use to describe this fic, right? xxxxxxx

Was kind of struggling (just like Liv) on how to get their impending conversation started, so I thought, take on her clothes. That'll solve it.