

Chapter 80

"Oh- Liv-" Wanda blinks those green eyes of hers and I feel my resolve crumble within me, my heart tugging at me to give in to her. "Livvy. Please stay with me."

She reaches with trembling fingers for my hands, and I let her take a hold of me, aware of what she just called me. Her skin, warm and so against mine feels so right, the way our hands mold together like they don't belong separately tugs at my heart again. I could pretend it's all right. She feels so right, she always did. But when I look up from our hands, meeting her eyes, it's not all right.

Her eyes pool with tears, making her irises come alive, the green of her eyes dancing like leaves on a tree in the middle of a summer storm as her pupils dilate into pools of darkness where I've lost myself many times before. Again, I want to just jump in anew, not caring about anything or anyone. She calls, and I answer. She's where I belong. She frowns slightly, creating small, fine lines on my face, her eyes travelling between my features, trying to discern my thoughts. She's still not reading my mind, realize as she bites her so, trembling lower lip, waiting for me to make a decision.

I open my mouth and she blinks expectantly, but I can't make a sound. I want to say yes, I'll stay, I'll be whoever you need to be, hurt me, use me, toss me aside if only I can be in your orbit a little while longer. Your flames burn me and scar me but they keep me warm and I would never run from you.

But her words from earlier remain echoing vividly in my ears. She doesn't remember me and she misses them. As much as I could attempt to ignore it, those words she spoke dug up all of the insecurities I had buried far below ground when she promised me it was me and only me. And I am not stupid. I recognize the chance I have been an orded because of Hydra. If they have erased me from her life, I have to go through with it. Because as I stand here now, looking into her broken, pleading expression, I am answer enough to realize she is just as broken as she was when our paths crossed for the first time. I never fixed her. I never helped her. I was the one that helped bend her more until she broke. I broke her.

"No." I hear myself utter calmly, and she exhales shakily, her pupils dilating more.

I tighten my grip on her hands and her eyebrows pull up as she shakes her head slightly, as if she could convince herself she didn't hear me. I feel oddly calm on the inside. It is almost as though I've been broken enough times for it not to hurt anymore. Where the hurt should be, I just feel empty. And so tired.

"All I've ever done is hurt you, love." I calmly tell her as her breathing becomes slightly irregular, forced. "From the moment we met we hurt each other. I can't believe how lucky I've been to have known you for as long as I have, which might not be that long but to me feels like a lifetime. I've come to love all your little quirks."

I smile weakly, unknitting our fingers and bringing my hand up slowly to her face where I press my thumb down so ly in the middle of her eyebrows where she always holds tension. Her eyes follow my hand and at my touch, her eyelids flutter close for a moment and her face relaxes. I allow myself to admire her one more time. I gently bring my hand onto the right side of her face, my thumb so ly caressing the wet area under her eye which makes her slowly open her eyes and hold mine with her intense gaze.

"If you ever need my help, I'll always be there for you. I just can't be here." I so ly tell her and lean in, giving her forehead a so peck.

I know I'm dragging this out, finding any excuse to touch her. If that means I'm selfish, then so be it. I know how much I'll replay this moment over and over when she's but a memory.

"I need your help now." Wanda's voice is tense and at the same time so quiet, her lips barely moving as she tries one more time, giving me one more opportunity.

I smile so ly. I could take it. I breathe in slowly, once more committing her face to my memory. My thumb brushes a crystal-like tear away from her porcelain skin, and then I let my hand drop from the side of her face, making her head slightly follow my movement before she is alone. My hand curls up in a fist next to me, wanting to preserve the feeling of her on my skin forever.

"Goodbye, Maximo." I whisper, with the greatest effort tearing my eyes free of hers, and then I turn around, doing the impossible.

As I start walking away from her, I finally allow my tears to freely roll down my cheeks. I quietly sob as I focus on placing one heavy foot in front of the other, that focus the only thing keeping me from completely breaking down. Wanda doesn't follow me. I knew she wouldn't, but it still hurts. It hurts so much. One foot. The other foot. I can barely see through my tears, and yet I somehow stay upright, placing more and more distance between myself and her.

And then I make it to the shore of the lake. I pause for a moment, trying to compose myself. I look out over the still waters, wondering if I should just walk in. Because what am I even walking towards anymore? I'm only walking away from everything.

I don't walk into the lake. I don't turn around. I march on and on for an ungodly amount of time until my tears dry and I am numb on the inside. And then I find the car. It's exactly where I le. It's covered in pine needles and a branch or two, touched by nature but untouched by man. The door to the driver's seat creaks open for me and I mechanically lower myself onto the seat, breathing in the stale air. The old, empty packet of chips crunches underneath my weight. I pull the door shut behind me, the loud noise rattling me, my heart pounding loudly and painfully in my chest as if it wants to make me aware of how much pain I have caused it.

It takes a few tries, but the car does start. And so I turn around in my seat, placing the car in reverse and my foot presses down on the gas and the car dutifully springs into motion, each hitch in the road making it complain loudly.

By now the sun is well on its way across the sky, covered by dark, heavy clouds, making the world beneath devoid of shadows as everything turns gray. I finally find enough space to be able to turn the car around and drive in the right direction, not needing the map as there is only one way to go. And that is keeping the large, hovering mountain in the rearview mirror.

How I make it back to New York is a mystery to even me. It takes about two days, but by some miracle, I find myself sitting on the floor of my cramped apartment with the lights on, staring o into the distance. I don't really know how long I've sat here for either. It seems as though my brain has announced it is taking a break, and I can't think straight or form any form of coherent thought. I just exist, my body routinely getting me from A to B. And so I am le to do is to sit and wait. For what I am waiting, that I don't know. All I know is my back and neck have been hurting for a while. But I still don't move, maybe reveling in the pain which reminds me that I still am here. Because I don't feel anything else, dancing on the event horizon of a black hole.

I try not to, but obviously all I see every time I blink is Wanda's face. She's all my ears hear too, constantly tricking me into hearing her speak my name when I know she is thousands of miles away from me, and I doubt even her telepathic skills would struggle against the distance. But it's as if my body has rejected my existence separate from that of hers, and if she isn't physically near, then it will pretend as though she is. A whisper in my ear, a touch to my cheek, a peek in the dark.

A lifetime of daydreaming later, something finally happens which forces me to return to my own body. Tenacious knocking on my door. The loud, unusual sound pierces the otherwise nearly silent surroundings and I just stare at the door which, in my small apartment is right in front of me, a few strides away. I don't move, but the knocking continues.

For a split-second, I let myself imagine it's Wanda on the other side of the door, and that she remembers, and that she's come back for me. I'll open the door and she'll crash onto me, her warmth against me, her hands in my hair and her lips on my lips, pushing me back into my cold apartment which isn't so cold anymore. But I know that cannot possibly be the case. Wanda doesn't remember. She's probably well on her way concocting some plan for getting her real family back, something I couldn't be used for. And the voice that finally speaks from the other side of the door is the thing that eventually completely an utterly squashes that sparkle of a dream of Wanda.

"Hello! Liv! Olivia! I know you're in there! You better open this door right this second or- or I'm kicking it down!" I slowly push myself o the floor, frowning at the familiarity of the voice, but not quite being able to process it as previously mentioned, my brain is out of o ice.

I numbly trail to the door, my hand automatically unlocking the several locks I have on my door, which takes a minute. Then, I slowly pull the door ajar, not even bothering to look through the peephole, something the old me would have been shocked at. But I'm no longer that girl, and honestly, if someone wants to rob me, be my guest.

But I'm not met with the hooded face of an unknown robber. Instead, I experience a sensory overload at the scream that greets me and the main of dark hair that suddenly envelops half of me in a tight hug.

"Oh my god, Liv! It is really you! I mean, I know it would have been you, but it is you! Darcy squeals, pulling away from me slightly, her hands still on my shoulders as her eyes scan over me, head to toe, her huge grin becoming slightly smaller as it is replaced by a frown.

"Oof, you look bad, girl." She says, drawing out the 'bad', and I just stand there, not bothered at all by how I must come across.

"God, it feels like I am holding a skeleton!" Darcy exclaims, a deep frown settling in on her expressive face and she pulls me into another hug, this one a lot more gentle than the last one. "My poor girl, what on earth happened to you? When did you eat last?"

She so ly unwraps herself from me, stepping into my apartment without an invite, but I am too tired to argue, but wanting the only company to be that of my own. But Darcy does not notice, or rather does not care, instead stomping into my space, invading it and looking so out of place in the bleak apartment contrasted by her explosion of color and life. She looks around as I mutely close the front door a er her.

"Wow, exactly how I imagined your place to be." She spins around with a sarcastic look on her face which makes my lips twitch in amusement. "Now, where is your food?"

She drops her handbag on the floor carelessly and steps into the open kitchen which is just a fancy word of describing the nook in the living room that has been equipped with the bare minimum one could in order to still call the space a kitchen. It's not like I ever really cared to cook, even had I had the time. Darcy ru les through the fridge, crinkling her nose in disgust, moving onto the cupboard and the shelves which I know she won't have any more luck with. I sigh and let myself sink down into my couch as I watch her move about, my eyes feeling like sandpaper.

"Darcy turns around to face me, her hands on her hips and a stern look on her face. "How old are you? Why is the only edible thing in your kitchen a packet of stale pop tart?"

"Would be handy to have some magic." I murmur, the only thing I can think of apparently Wanda, and my brain decides to chip in by playing one of my good memories with her, the one where we made pancakes and she suddenly stocked out the fridge just to tease me, with a twinge in my heart I remember how I splattered dough on her nose and how she had laughed.

"Okay, magic girl." Darcy quickly unwraps her scarf and takes her coat and beanie o, placing them on the back of one of my two dining chairs.

She bounds forward, joining me on the couch, looking at me expectantly through her glasses with a kind smile on her red lips. I sigh, knowing I'm about to have to relieve it all.

"How did you find my apartment?" I ask her, trying to steer the conversation away from her.

"How did I- Olivia, are you dumb?" Darcy chuckles disbelief on her face. "Look at who you're talking to! I've been scouring the internet for any sign of you a er you hung up on me when you went to look for Wanda!"

I swallow harshly at the sound of her name, a little knife twisting in my chest, but Darcy doesn't notice, thankfully.

"Nothing, nothing nothing! And then there you are! I couldn't believe my eyes! I murmur flatly, but she keeps going.

"And so an accidental click here, an accidental click there, and oops, here I am!" She grins widely, her smile faltering slightly at my weak attempt at a smile.

"Seriously, honey, are you alright?" Darcy's voice lowers slightly in pitch as she looks at me worriedly.

I feel my eyes burn, but I stubbornly push my tears away and nod forcefully at Darcy, whose expression of concern does not change.

"Just tired." I manage to say and Darcy's eyebrows rise slightly and she hums slowly.

"Right..."

"Jet lag." I muster a smile and she frowns at me, her expression clearly telling me to cut the bullshit.

"Sure thing. Jet lag will also suddenly make you lose 20 pounds. What a bitch." Darcy mutters, her eyes going over me again with a displeased expression.

"I'm sorry, Darcy." I sigh, raking my fingers through my greasy hair. "It's just been... it's been a lot." I finish with a quaver in my voice and Darcy's expression softens.

"Alright. Here is what we're going to do, you and me." She straightens out her back, sitting up straighter, a woman on a mission. "I am taking you to Ithop. No, no, I don't want to hear it. I am getting food into you and the truth out of you."

What Darcy puts her mind to, she succeeds at. I allow myself to be driven to Ithop, which takes about 15 minutes longer than it should because Darcy cannot drive to save her life, or mine, for that matter. Why she decided to drive in New York City beats me, but she thoroughly spat at my suggestion of taking the subway, saying that not even her love for me would make her stay in New York should she see a rat. So car it was.

A er I struggled to get even halfway through my stack of pancakes, my appetite apparently also something Wanda stole from me, Darcy lost her patience and coaxed everything out of me. I told her about Wanda and Agatha, about how I somehow was able to bring Wanda and me back in time but that backfired, and how we spent time with the Avengers (did I meet Thor? Did he remember Darcy? Is Banner as sexy as he seems?), and about Barnes and Hydra and everything in between until how Wanda and I escaped from Hydra, and how I le. Darcy for once in probably her entire life, sits quietly, mouth hanging open, staring at me.

"You - wow, man! Someone should write you a fucking movie!" She stares at me so intensely I'm afraid her eyes might pop out of her skull.

"Some movie that would be." I sulk. "Hollywood wouldn't like the ending."

"Ending?" Darcy frowns.

"Me, with you, in Ithop at 2:30 am." I chuckle tiredly and she hu s.

"Please, that would be the ending of dreams. But Liv, this isn't over."

"What do you mean?"

"You, Wanda, this isn't it." Darcy shakes her head, leaning back against the red leathery fabric of the booth, looking at me like I'm slightly stupid. "I have invested too much time into you two stupid sons of bitches to allow this to be it. Nuh-oh."

"Didn't you listen to me?" I sigh. "She doesn't remember, she."

"Oh, grow up!" Darcy snaps and I go quiet, surprised at her outburst.

"What?" I stutter.

"Grow up! What, you just come running back here with your tail tucked between your legs? Where did your fight go? You gotta fight for yo woman!"

"Fight for my woman?" I repeat with a genuine laugh. "Darcy, I did fight. Me fighting for her got us into this whole mess in the first place. Don't you think the kind thing to do is -"

"The kind thing to do?" Darcy repeats as if this is the most outrageous thing she has ever heard. I'm silently grateful for the lack of customers around us, because she isn't being the most discreet.

"Liv, I love you, and you must be somewhat smart to work for the FBI, but sometimes, the shit you say..." Darcy shakes her head and rolls her eyes, making me feel slightly annoyed. What does she know? She wasn't there, she didn't have to go through all of that. She never had to sit in that chair, having had everything good torn away from her.

"When you forgot about Wanda, what did she do, him?" Darcy speaks matter of factly and I return my attention to her.

"What did she do?" I frown, confused. "What do you mean?"

"Oh my god." Darcy places her elbows on the table dramatically, as if this conversation is the most tedious she's ever had. "Did Wanda do the 'kind thing'?"

"The what?"

"Jesus, jet lag really doesn't agree with you. Right. Did she leave you?" Darcy cuts to the chase. "Did she say, 'oh well, I guess this is my chance, goodbye Liv?'"

"What? No, she-"

"Exactly. What did Wanda do?" Darcy stares at me and I swallow.

"She stayed."

"She stayed." Darcy repeats with a nod, her voice so er.

"But Darcy, this isn't the same."

"No? Because to me it sounds the same. The only difference is she stayed for you and you le her."

"It's not like that." I say, my blood boiling at the accusation.

"Liv, you can try to explain it away as much as you want, but that's exactly how it is." Darcy dryly says, all sort of joking completely gone from her mannerisms. "Do you love Wanda?"

"Huh?" I cross my arms across my chest protectively, leaning back against the booth.

"Do - you - love - Wanda?" Darcy repeats slowly and clearly, her eyes sparkling.

"Why?" I skit around the subject and she narrows her eyes at me.

"You never said. In your story, you never explicitly said you love her. I mean, I could read into it, but do you? Love her?"

I bite my cheek, trying to distract myself from the pain as Darcy hits the nail squarely on the head. Of course, I know the answer. It's right there, plain and simple. But I le for her to have a chance.

"I did." I whimper pathetically, giving in.

"Stop being a coward." Darcy sighs and my throat constricts with emotion.

"Yes." I whisper, my eyes welling up, which surprises me as I thought I had nothing le to give.

"Yes, what?"

"I love her." My voice shakes slightly and I have to look away from Darcy, out from the window next to us.

"So why did you not fight for her?" I hear Darcy ask me and my lip quivers slightly.

"Because she doesn't love me."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Darcy, please stop." I sni le, not wanting to pull that wound open when the scab hasn't even formed yet.

"No, Liv, I want you to be completely honest with yourself. You can't just decide other people's feelings to make your life easier."

"What?" My head snaps back in her direction. "Are you kidding? I'm sorry, but I'm not going to sit here and-"

"Oh shut up, you brat." Darcy rolls her eyes at me again and I look at her in shock, never having heard her talk like this to me.

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me. You're behaving like a brat."

"I don't think that's fair." I defend myself, anger rising again. "You weren't there, you don't know."

"You're right, I wasn't. But I can read between the lines well enough. Do you honestly think that just because Hydra made her forget about you everything you two went through together, what, just means nothing?"

"I didn't say-"

"Did she love you?" Darcy asks me, ignoring my bullshit.

"She said she did." I mutter.

"So she did. Do you think you can just erase love?"

"No, but Darcy it's not that simple. I was just -" I fater slightly, and Darcy doesn't interrupt as I search for the words, nails digging into the palm of my hand. "I was just a bandaid."

"What do you mean?"

"She maybe loved me but she was never mine." I sigh, looking out of the window again, not particularly happy with having to actually voice this out loud.

"But if-"

"She still wants Vision. She wants her kids. You knew her during Westview. That's what she wants. Not me." My voice rings hollow and empty.

Darcy stays silent and I don't care to fill the silence. Instead, I just keep staring out of the dark window at the street, watching the occasional car drive by. Why Darcy had to force me to actually say that I don't know, I don't know what she thought she was going to achieve with that, but there it is. And it stings, and I just want to go back to my apartment and sit in the dark and quiet until I can bear to pretend to have forgotten about her.

"You're right." Darcy finally breaks the heavy silence and her admission makes me look at her in surprise. I thought she was going to fight me on this.

"I wasn't there. I didn't go through all of that with you two. If you really believe this is how it ends for you two, then you alone can make that decision. I just think you are being a coward."

I hu , attempting to keep my composure. A coward. I've been nothing but. I fought for her until the end. But at every turn she showed me who she truly belonged to, so why should I fight fate? She made her choice and now I have to accept it. That isn't being a coward.

"Let's go. I'll drive you home." Darcy quietly tells me, standing up, looking at me expectantly. "And bring those pancakes."

A/N: You could blame all the angst on me, but I don't think that would be fair. I have been listening to Cigarettes A er Sex whilst writing these last few chapters, so I would place the blame there.

ALSO - I know I've been asking a lot of you and I just want to say I'm so grateful that you have stuck with this mess of a story for 80 long chapters. All the votes, and your comments especially have been so, so, so lovely and I feel like we've built a lil community and I just want you to know I'm so, so, so grateful, and you'll see that gratefulness soon, I promise. Stick with me a little while longer, angels.

Anyways, sop aside, I hope Darcy was a pleasant surprise! I feel like she kind of took on your feelings there for a bit calling Liv out like that, haha!

oooh, the next chapters will be fun, my loves!ies! xxx