Chapter 87

I turn the old, slightly unyielding knob to the right and the water slowly and stubbornly trickles to a halt. The occasional droplet escapes and falls down onto my burning shoulders. I convince myself that is the reason for the goosebumps all over my skin. I awkwardly peek over my shoulder, knowing that she is still sitting on the edge of the bathtub, not having heard the door close at any point. I'm right. Of course I am. the goosebumps aren't from the water. She coyly drops the slender hand she was using to keep my water from turning me into a lobster. I cannot see much of her face as she keeps looking straight ahead to give me some semblance of privacy, but her cheeks are slightly flushed and a ghost of a smile plays on her lips. My stomach does some sort of pirouette inside me, awakening the dormant butterflies which take flight and make me feel almost drunk.

"I don't have a towel."

My voice sounds oddly calm, echoing slightly within the inside of the tiled walls. It's odd considering my nerves have started what feels like a Cinco de Mayo party. My mouth is dry and I silently scold myself for being so forgetful, my attention only on the task at hand, never thinking ahead. And now I'm standing here, utterly naked with her right there. Despite my annoyance at myself, I know this is not an issue as I know there are a couple of old, slightly worryingly stained towels underneath the sink. The only problem is that she's in the way and I cannot help myself to one unless I care to lean right past her. Naked. Which I do not, really. I turn my eyes onto Wanda's half-obscured face in time to catch her biting her lower lip in an attempt to keep herself from smiling. She blinks, releases her lip, and exhales, and I wonder why I am studying her movements as though I were an explorer who accidentally stumbled upon the rarest of creatures. Wanda's cheeks blossom in color and her eyes flit to mine so quickly had I blinked I would have missed it.

"Oh." She lets out a shaky breath and slowly stands up, brushing a stubborn strand of hair that escaped the loose constraints of her tired bun behind her ear. That is all she seems to be able to convince herself to do, as she stands there, gnawing on that lip staring blankly ahead with a blushing face.

I let out an awkward hum, finally convincing my eyes to let go of her and turn them onto that yellowish tile in front of me as I wrap my arms around my naked torso, for once at a loss of what to do or say, which irks me more than I care to admit. I am no longer a stupid child and she is no longer someone my insides should be burning for. So why can't I stop reacting the way I am?

Grasping onto that little flame of annoyance before it is extinguished, I turn around on my heels, aware of her green gaze pretending it isn't on me. But I am fuelled by some sort of pride I didn't know was hiding within me, so I confidently lift one leg and step out of the bath, and then the other, until I am standing shoulder to shoulder with her. The Cinco de Mayo party inside me has seemed to reach its peak.

"Oh." I hear her exhale once more, her eyes round like saucers as they're fixed on a point straight ahead of her.

Her uselessness gives me some joy and with a smirk, I take a small step forward and lean in front of her towards the cabined hosting my prize.

"'scuse me." I murmur as I slip in front of her and feel her shock seep through her into me.

She goes to say something back, but her words seem to hitch on some invisible trap in the back of her throat and all she is able to produce is some form of sound not quite resembling any words I am familiar with. That again stokes the flames of my ego and I finally clasp my fingers around the scratchy material that is a towel, feeling like waving it over my head like some sort of flag.

I don't, of course, opting to instead simply wrapping the towel around me, my heart thumping in my chest both from exhilaration and probably from fear I'm about to experience, but cannot quite yet due to whatever adrenaline rush I was blessed with. Cold droplets of water drip down the strands of my hair onto my burning back, and just as I finish wrapping the towel around me, another sensation reaches my brain from the skin on my back and suddenly all thoughts other than that feeling are dispersed. A finger so softly traces from the back of my neck down my shoulder blade so very slowly I forget I have a need for breathing.

Her finger is so soft. So light. So cool. So many things but I don't have the words. All I can do is freeze as I was and wait. All of my previously newfound power and confidence vanished with the touch of a finger. I hear her let out a small, slightly displeased hum.

"You burned yourself." She whispers softly, her voice breaking slightly and I shiver involuntarily.

"Er, I-" I stutter, my tongue feeling fuzzy and inept at its job.

"It's okay." Her breath skims against my exposed skin and I think the police should be called on the party in me.

Just like I did previously, she leans past me, keeping a hold of me by simply keeping a hand lightly pressed against my shoulder blade. She refuses to look at me as she deftly opens a drawer in front of us, grabbing some crumpled-up thing I can't focus on with her so close to me. A little part of me is angrily shouting at me to get a grip and step away, but the rest of me is at the illegal party, high and drunk.

She shuts the drawer softly and then leans back, resuming her earlier position of standing just slightly behind me. I am suddenly overcome with gratitude at the lack of mirrors in the bathroom, for I don't think my facial expressions are on my side at the moment.

Her hand leaves my back and I can breathe again. I turn my head to question her, but she places that irksome finger on my jaw and pushes my head back.

"Wait."

"What-"
"Stop arguing with me." Her voice is dark but I can almost hear her slight smile.

"But I-" I begin again, trying to listen to the voice of reason within me.

"Liv." Wanda warns and my heart joins the party thinking she'll call me the nickname reserved for her lips only. Of course, she doesn't, but for a second I thought-

Her hand returns to my back, this time coated in something cool. I jolt slightly, surprised at the contact as she starts spreading whatever substance it is on my back. I quickly relax into her touch as the thing she's applying actually feels heavenly, cooling my still angry skin from the shower.

"You don't have to..." I weakly begin but she shushes me.

"I don't mind." She says and I want to tell her I do, I mind, I can't be toyed with like this, and yet I can't seem to properly speak up for myself. Seem or want, both the same.

"Wanda, I'm fine, I-" I half-heartedly try again as she places the cream onto my right shoulder with firm fingers.

"I told you - I don't mind." She repeats, her voice certain.

"Fine." I mutter, trying to make it look like I am at least not entirely fine with this.

"I think I like... helping y- people." The certainty of her earlier statement is gone.

I don't know what to reply with, not missing the word she almost let slip. But she didn't, and so I allow myself to rebuild some of the barricades I had built in order to shield myself from her advancements. She continues applying the ointment carefully, examining every inch of reddened skin.

"Thank you." I simply exhale as her fingers continue skimming over my back, not bothering telling her she could probably heal me within seconds using her scarlet should she wish to. I'm almost certain she's aware of that too.

"You're welcome." She replies and we let ourselves stand there in comfortable silence.

After a few minutes, she can't seem to find any excuse to prolong the moment, so I feel her hands drop from my back and my half-closed eyelids flutter open. I swallow forcefully, turning around to face her, my arms draped across my chest, holding my towel in place. I think I've used up all of my confidence now, coming face to face with her.

Her round eyes are fixated on one of my shoulders, probably examining the extent of the damage. Her dark eyelashes are harshly contrasted against the pale skin under her eyes, which has a slight blue tint to it, letting me know she hasn't caught much sleep either last night. I'm painfully reminded of the last time I was this close to her. Her green eyes travel up my face to meet my eyes and the party which seemed as though it had died down slightly is crashed by new guests who raucously restart the festivities. We stand there in silence for a few heartbeats before Wanda's brows begin pulling together into a frown and her lips part slightly and her eyes turn into pools of liquid green questions.

"Can I?" She timidly asks, indicating at my chest.

I look down, confused, realizing she is asking if she can tend to my front as she did to my back. I clutch the towel slightly tighter and she blinks a couple of times as I know she does when she tries to push back some emotion she finds unuseful at the moment.

I do the same, pushing down my common sense and nod, not meeting her eyes. She promptly squeezes some of the white lotion into her hands, then places the tube onto the sink to her right. She brings her hands together, spreading the lotion between her hands. Then, she takes a very small, uncertain step toward me. She lifts her hands, which I notice are ever so slightly trembling, up to my sternum. They hover just above my skin and it feels as though her scarlet pulsates from them. The invisible force between us makes my skin prickle.

I look up from her hands to her face, finding her soft green eyes already looking into my eyes. She's so close I am able to see the myriad of greens swirling about in her eyes, the specks of gold and brown dotted carefully in there too. Her light freckles, and the darker beauty spot on her right cheek. None of them are unfamiliar to me, rather the opposite.

"Okay?" I see her lips form rather than hear.

"Okay." I do the same and she looks away from my eyes onto her hands, which she lightly places on my sternum just under my clavicle.

My heart beats furiously against her hand. I watch her focus on her hands as she softly smooths the lotion over my upper chest. It's almost comical how close we are physically and how far apart we are in every other aspect.

Her pupils dilate, invading the green around them and I have to look away in fear of being sucked in and forgetting everything.

"Tell me if you need me to stop." She breathes softly as her hands move from the center of my chest up, spreading warmth through me in the way the shower never could.

I don't tell her to stop. I don't think I could even speak should I wish to. My throat is constricted and my mouth dry and all I am is the heartbeat under her palm.

"I keep-" Wanda begins, but the words die somewhere, unspoken.

She moves her hands steadily up. They're on the sides of my neck. She frowns. They're on my jaw, her thumbs trace the bone underneath. She blinks furiously, her lips parting slightly as she breathes in through her mouth in small breaths which skim my face. Then her thumb traces my bottom lip. Her eyes are glued to it, questions swirling across her face. I stay stiller than I have in my entire life.

Come out and haunt me, I want to tell her, no longer caring about the repercussions. I know you want me. Old ghosts are nothing to me, I've got plenty following me around. What's one more?

She meets my eyes, hers suddenly calm as though an ocean of emotion wasn't crashing back and forth within them mere heartbeats ago. Her thumb moves slightly to the side and without breaking eye contact, she leans in. Slowly enough for me to stop her. Slowly enough for me to back away. Slowly enough for me to not make a single decision.

Softly our lips meet and her eyes close. The last thing I note is the frown on her face.

Her hands keep my face in place as though she's afraid I might disappear into thin air. Her lips move against mine slowly, all of their previous encounter's fearsomeness gone. My hands do not manage to let go of my towel, hanging on for dear life, and so she has all control. She pushes herself into me, forcing me to step back, step by step. The party within me has reached new heights.

Her forcefulness against me isn't translated to the kiss, which stays surprisingly light. My shoulder blades come into contact with cold tiles and the rest of me is pushed against the cold wall as she tries to remove every atom of matter from in-between the two of us. My body is reeling from the jump from cold to hot and back again, finding no stability through the ground beneath my bare feet. Her sock-clad feet push their way between mine. Her hands shake in their grasp of my face. My thoughts are linear, simple, only noting the sensations my body feels. Her teeth accidentally knocking into mine. Her hair tickling my temple. The cold of the tiles against my back and feet. Her warm body against my front, pressing. The roughness of the fabric between my hands. Her silken lips against mine, forming and molding me. The fireworks deep within me.

She presses harder against me, her breathing ragged as her thumbs feverishly move back and forth on either side of my jaw. My head is stuck between the wall and her, and I can't move back to give her more space as she takes more and more of me. A rush of need runs through me and I carefully trap her bottom lip between my teeth, biting down gently, earning a hitched sigh from her before I let it go and she resumes the kiss with more passion and haste than before.

I feel one of her hands slip down my throat, past my chest, and down to where my own hands are trapped holding up the towel. She doesn't break the kiss as she moves her hands over the towel, squeezing, making me gasp at her forwardness. I decide one of my hands can probably be sacrificed and I let go of the towel, my hand sneaking around her waist and desperately pulling her even closer, my confused emotions only bowing to the physical need of needing her closer to me.

Time has no meaning and I am almost surprised when we finally part, having grown to believe my existence to be dependent on her. She doesn't move more than to break the kiss, our foreheads and noses still touching, our breaths heavy in between us. My run earlier did not have me breathing like this.

"I keep-" Wanda tried again, her voice low. She pauses and I open my eyes.

She's so close I can't really focus on her.

"I keep looking." She finds it in her to continue, pulling away from me slightly, allowing us to see each other.

She's keeping her eyes closed, though, her nose crinkled in a frown as she tried to sort through her jumbled thoughts. I give her time, just like I've always done.

"I keep looking for something but you're right here." She cracks open her eyes slightly, wetting her slightly pouty lips with her tongue.

"I'm so sorry." She whispers, her thumb gently stroking my cheek.

"I keep searching and using you and you deserve better. I'm so sorry." Her voice cracks and I lean forward, letting our lips meet again in a soft kiss.

"You deserve better." I whisper when I lean back against the tiles.
"You shouldn't have to search for anything."
"I can't help but-" She shakes her head slightly, unable to express herself. "I'm looking for you when I have him."

I know the party within me is over now. All it took was the mention of him. I don't have anything to placate her with, so I stay silent. She watches me with an expression I don't quite love; one mixed with guilt and something akin to pity.

"We should probably... before everyone else wakes up." I murmur just to get away from that look and she nods.

"Yeah. I -I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize. I didn't stop you."
"I'm still- I'm still sorry." She disentangles herself from me, not meeting my eyes and I can only hope she's not apologizing because she regrets it.

She smooths out her slightly wrinkly cardigan, wrapping it around her as she takes another look at me before going to open the door to the cabin. I let her step out first, waiting a few moments, composing myself before I grab my clothes, following her out.

The cabin is still dark; it's still early in the morning. The door to her room is closed still, and I hope he's still asleep. Or run out of battery.

Wanda's in the kitchen, rummaging about. I walk towards the further away end of the cabin, quickly folding up my clothes and placing them in the corner, grabbing a pair of sweatpants which I slip into, still wrapped in my towel. Modesty should be out the window, but I can't shake the feeling of being an intruder in the space.

"Do you want some tea?" Wanda's voice reaches my ears and I cast her a glance.

She, annoyingly enough, looks rather adorable, standing there with two mugs in her hands looking at me expectantly. I don't particularly need tea, feeling like I might need something stronger to get me through the day. But I can't say no to her so I give her a little nod and she smiles sweetly.

I continue my search for clothes as she turns back around, quickly finding the rest of what I need, topping it off with Steve's old hoodie. I wonder if Nat will recognize it. I grab the towel, walking back into the restroom all the whilst drying my hair. When I emerge again, my heart sinks.

He's awake, and he's in the kitchen, his arms wrapped around her waist as he hugs her from behind, giving her small kisses on her cheek as she's making me tea, a small giggle leaving the lips I just kissed.

"Slept well, darling?" I catch him asking her as he spins her around.

"I did." She lies to him, a soft smile on her face, her eyes sparkling as she looks up at him, not noticing me.

"Good." He bends down, giving her another kiss, this time on her lips.

I exhale silently, not knowing what to do. Fortunately, or unfortunately for me, the kiss is short-lived as Wanda pulls back slightly, her green eyes instantly meeting mine.

"I- tea's... ready." She awkwardly says as he straightens out, tall and lanky, and turns to look at me.

I muster all of the strength within me. I cannot just walk up to him and hit him. I could however ask Yelena to...

"It's okay. I don't want it." I curtly tell Wanda, walking past them, forgetting to put on shoes but needing to get away as fast as possible, heading towards the jet outside.

I feel their eyes on my back as I exit.

"She's a peculiar one." I hear him whisper to her before I slam the door behind me in anger.

"What the fuck are you wearing?" Natasha almost slams into me on the porch.

A/N: Happy Monday! I must be feeling particularly nice, because I don't think these past chapters have been too angsty, don't you?? Almost... nice? Shudders...

Hope y'all enjoy as one of you called it, the 3rd Liv and Wanda slow burn :)))) Will we ever be happy who knows??? I certainly don't, this was ANOTHER unplanned kiss???

Do get ready though, because something is bout to happen once again and you will love me for it.........

Love you, stay safe little angels (and don't read at work or school;)) !
x

Continue reading next part ☐