

Chapter 93

I just feel so anxious. Too anxious. It's all I'm able to feel, lately. Anxiety. On edge. Tenseness. That gnawing, unsettling feeling at the pit of your stomach, which spreads slowly throughout your body, coldly, making your heart race and your hands cold and clammy. Although I normally am able to quell that emotion by running, going to the gym, or drinking alone in that little grimy pub back home, now, the feeling just won't leave me. I tried to run, to exercise, and yet my legs felt weak and I was gasping for air within minutes. It's like I'm wearing a corset, and it forces me to breathe shallowly. Nothing gets in, but everything gets out. I keep bleeding. For a little while there, I thought that I had found something in Wanda, something that sucked that feeling out of me, leaving me just being me. Whole, and maybe even safe. But hindsight is everything, and now I can't escape my anxiety at all, especially around her. I'm not safe. And neither is she around me. My heart flutters away in my chest.

I kick a stone in front of me in angry contemplation as I walk aimlessly around, the cabin hosting my problems not too far away behind me. I've walked around in circles for about half an hour or so, but time doesn't really mean anything to me anymore. But I have to admit defeat. I'm too cold to stray further. I tuck my hands in my armpits, trying to keep warm, my chest feeling weird. I have from a headache too, to add to my physical discomfort. I feel so exhausted mentally. I know I have to stay. I promised Wanda and I promised myself I owed it to her, a er everything I put her through, but really, I just want to run away. I've admitted defeat. She could have been my solace and I could have been happy. Maybe she even could have learned to be happy with me. She did seem it. Could-haves are unfortunately all I can count on in life.

Mount Wundagore towers over me as I feel small and sorry for myself, the gray clouds becoming heavier and heavier rather quickly, already thick enough to hide the very top of the mountain from view. I shiver. I never felt truly welcome here. I think back to my grandparents' country house, the one I spoke to Wanda about once, and I wish I was there. In another life, maybe I could have taken her there. I think she might have liked it. Could-have.

I sigh heavily as a gust of wind brings with it a couple of little, shy, droplets of rain. I need to get back, or I risk getting totally soaked. I make a u-turn and begrudgingly walk back the way I came from, not wishing to know what situation I'm going to be walking in on. I wonder if Natasha has managed to persuade Vision to join her suicide pact, or if Vision has finally decided to give into Wanda and just stay with her as she wished him to. Or maybe even Yelena has convinced Natasha to figuratively not jump o that cli . I wipe a raindrop o my brow. What a great fucking situation I've found myself in. One suicidal Russian assassin, one all too perceptive robot, and a witch who is stuck in the past, mentally. For a moment I wonder if Yelena and Darcy would just run away with me. Fuck, I need a drink.

"Get it together, Liv." I mutter to myself, trying to snap out of my spiraling.

I fall into a brisk jogging pace despite my body's complaints and my mind wishing to be anywhere else but where I'm headed. I feel my breath rattle in my lungs and briefly wonder if I might not be catching a cold.

I quickly catch sight of the cabin again, lonely and dark with the jet nearby. The clouds have gotten so heavy now that they are blocking out most of the daylight from reaching the valley, and the world seems to no longer harbor shadows as everything begins to resemble an amorphous entity. I trip a couple of times over invisible roots as my legs go lazy, but I don't fall all the way to the ground. The lights inside the cabin shine warmly, beckoning me inside. For a second I allow a fantasy about me returning from a long jog to find just Wanda inside the cabin, cooking me her favorite soup before we huddle up on the couch together, conversing like we used to. I let the fantasy go though, because that is what it is. A could-have.

I slow down as I pass the jet, noticing faint sounds coming from its inside but not bothering to check who the voices belong to as I feel too sluggish, craving the warmth of the cabin and maybe a cup of tea. I clomp up the porch and pause for a moment in front of the door, gathering myself, steeling myself. I can do this. I accept it.

My palm grazes against the wooden door as my other hand presses the door handle down, and I push the door open, an instant warmth caressing my face and I shiver again, my teeth clattering so ly together. I step in, looking around. The cabin is seemingly empty. I close the door behind me, and my body instantly feels like I've stepped into a warm bath. But it isn't the warmth of the cabin, it's

Wanda I tentatively think inside my own head, recognizing the familiar feeling of her mind around me.

Where were you? She sounds slightly impatient. An anxious wave hits me, but I think it might belong to her.

I take o my shoes. I had to-
I feel o She interrupts me, annoyed, while her thoughts are surprisingly gentle where I thought they would cut like a knife. I recognize then it is because she can feel me just as I can feel her, obviously, and must be understanding my need for some space.

I hum so ly as I walk to the kitchen, planning on making myself some tea. But the mere thought of it seems to drain me of energy, so I move towards the couch instead, thinking I'll just slumber there for a moment before trying again. As I walk, the door to the bedroom opens and Wanda tiptoes out, wearing sweatpants and a blue sweater, her hair falling down her back in loose waves. She looks so cosy, and I want to just- No, Liv. No could-haves! She meets my eyes, tucking some of her hair behind her ear as she quietly closes the door behind her. I plaster on a tired smile, which doesn't have its intended effect, as Wanda instantly frowns, narrowing her eyes at me as she walks closer, her round eyes scanning my face.

"Are you okay?" She asks in a velvety tone, sending another wave of shivers down my back.

"Just tired." I smile a taut smile and she li s a hand, placing it on my forehead. I try to ignore her proximity, and how my body seems to want to remove the small bit of space between me and her.

"Okay, just tired." She smiles so ly. "I think you're sick."

She drops her hand from me and meets my eyes again, worry swirling around in hers. I feel conflicted, on one hand feeling slightly accomplished that she would worry, but on the other hand, I wish she'd just leave me alone like I asked her to.

"I'm sick?" I repeat. "That's rude, Wanda."

"Who " Wanda looks confused before she catches on and her face contorts into a smirk and she chuckles. "Oh. You're funny. I'll remember that."

"Not my best, but I'll take it." I brush past her, again ignoring the jolt in my stomach as I pass her.

I walk around to the couch, setting myself down on it, taking the end I always use. I place my elbows on my knees and let my head rest in my hands for a moment, trying to shake the feeling of fever beginning to burn up in me. I close my eyes, hoping Wanda would realize my need for space again, and go back to her room.

Naturally, she doesn't.

I feel the cushions of the couch shi slightly under the weight of her body as she lowers herself down next to me. I feel a light, so weight over my shoulders and I raise my head, surprised. Wanda innocently wraps the old blanket I have slept under many a time around me, her expression relaxed, a small smile on her delicate lips.

"Stop being so hard on yourself." She tells in a worried tone.

"What do you mean?" I frown, not following.

"I can hear you. You're very loud, you know." Wanda gently knocks on my forehead to emphasize, her eyebrows shooting up. I feel nostalgic.

"Hm. You say that o en."

"Do I?" She cocks her head slightly, watching me curiously.

"I should just feed you stories that make me look good, shouldn't I?" I smile weakly and she laughs breathily, the sound of her laughter always taking me by surprise, a sound that is all too rare and one which you wish you could hear again as soon as it leaves you.

"I'll know if you do." She blushes. "You're not that cool."

I hum tiredly, giving her a smile. I'm almost not aware of my need for her to leave me alone. Every time she looks at me, I hope she'd look at me the same way as she used to. But she never does. She still cannot remember me. I wish I had the strength to fight for us, but I don't think I do.

"Can I ask you a question?" She wonders, a slightly hesitant look on her so features.

"You just did."

"Ha." She gives me a stern look. "Funny."

"Told you."

"You told me you love me." Wanda states out of the blue and I feel slightly taken aback by her change of direction.

"I did."

"Did I love you?" She looks at me timidly, her eyes round and pure, nothing but honesty in them.

I don't answer her straight away. I wet my lips, thinking,

"I think I did, didn't I?" She whispers when the silence stretches on.

"I don't know." I look at her and she looks slightly disappointed with my answer. "You said you did. But I don't think you ever let Vision go." Something flashes across her face and she sits up slightly straighter, clearing her throat.

"And now you want me to choose."

"I never said that."

"So you're choosing for me, then?" She looks at me pointedly.

"Don't I have a say in this?"

"Don't I have a say?" Wanda whines and I realize the emotional stress she must be under, but I'm not strong enough to carry any of that load for her anymore. I've done it for too long.

"You've had your say. You asked me to take you back in time so you could be reunited with your family." I tell her and she looks slightly taken aback.

"I'm so confused." She murmurs, raking her fingers through her hair. "I'm trying to remember and I can see glimpses, but it's... all as though I'm watching through murky water. None of it makes sense."

I sigh, recognizing that feeling all too well. The feeling of almost remembering, but your memories slip through your fingers each time you think you're there.

"I wish I could make you remember, like you did for me." I whisper melancholically.

"I wish you could too." Wanda touches my cheek briefly. "I don't really remember you, but I want to."

I don't have any response for her, or any words of encouragement. I'm past that stage. I wish I could hang onto hope that she still might, but I don't know what to do to help her.

"Vision says I need to let him go." Wanda suddenly admits, her voice wavering.

"Do you want to?" I ask her, nothing hiding behind my words.

"I don't know." Wanda bites her bottom lip, looking up at me through her long lashes. "I know him. I feel safe with him, at home. I don't know you."

She pauses, frowning as she searches my face, her eyes tearing at my heart and I wish my heart could listen to my head and just give up.

"But... but I think there's something here." Wanda places a steady hand over the blanket, right where my heart is. It beats against my ribcage, as if trying to leave me for her. "I can feel it. But I don't understand it."

"Do you want to?" I ask her again, this time, a spark of hope hides behind my question although I try to quell it.

Her pure green eyes hold mine and my vision narrows, seeing nothing but her. Her eyes are my home, whether I like it or not, and I never want to leave, although I probably should pack my things.

"I do." She breathily whispers, her hand still on my heart, which somersaults.

"I want to help you understand, more than anything." I tell her truthfully, "But I can't keep getting hurt, and I don't want to keep breaking you, Wanda. I can't do it. I promise to make it all right, but then I'll."

"Leave me?" She interrupts me, something icy behind her words. She drops her hand.

"If you want me to, then yes."

She exhales forcefully through her nose, sitting up straighter. I know she's scrambling to build her walls high around herself again, and I don't know I've hurt her. But I keep bleeding. She's a could-have.

"I don't know Olivia. I don't know Everyone keeps wanting me to make decisions but I don't know! I don't!" She rambles and I instantly feel awful, watching her eyes pool up with unshed tears.

"Hey, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you." I slip one hand through the confines of the blanket that is still wrapped around me, grabbing a hold of one of her anxious hands.

I hold onto her tightly, showing her I'm still here, and I'm not leaving her. I'm here. Her breathing slows somewhat as she seemingly calms down. I didn't realize she was this afraid of me leaving. I should have. Again, I hurt her. I brush my thumb across the back of her hand soothingly.

"I'm sorry, Wanda." I tighten my grip on her hand momentarily.

"It's fine, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have - I know you're finding this di icult, too." She innocently speaks, giving me a weak smile that doesn't quite reach her eyes, which still harbor pain.

"It's fine." I tell her, meaning it. I can take it.

"Can you..." Wanda frowns as she tries to articulate what she wants said. She finally finds it, and continues timidly. "Can you talk to me about us?"

I smile involuntarily, and nod. I can do that. And so I talk to her. She listens. My thumb strokes her hand. She doesn't interrupt. She just watches me with a smile in her eyes. I talk for a long time. Long enough for my voice to go hoarse. But I need to get it all out. I keep bleeding. It's the closest to her I've felt in a long time. And it's so pure, innocent. She just lets me bleed as she absorbs it. No could-haves. Just her. And just me. And just the truth. I don't sugar coat it, not even the painful parts. I need her to understand while I have the chance.

She holds onto my hand.

When I stop talking, my head pounding dully and my voice scratchy, the back of my throat burning and I feel as though I've just completed a marathon, or something of the like. I wish I could just curl up and sleep. Wanda stays silent. She stares at me for a while, but I doubt she's really seeing me. Her eyes are glossed over, her nose slightly crinkled up in a small frown, the lines fine around her eyes which reflect me back. I wait for her, like I've always done. She sits up straighter and looks at me with a determined look.

"I'm making you soup."

With that, she lets go of my hand and presses her hands against her thighs and stands up, determinedly strutting down the length of the cabin, leaving me confused on the couch, wondering when, if ever, I will know exactly where we stand with regards to each other. We seem to go from hot to cold to lukewarm and back again without any form of pattern. As I listen to her rummaging around in the kitchen, I just feel drained. How much longer I'm going to be able to keep this up, I don't know.

"You know, I'm actually okay." I speak out to her without looking back at her, my voice fatigued and feeble.

"You will be. A er I take care of you." She hums back and I feel even more exhausted.

"Hush."

I sigh, accepting defeat. Leaning back against the cushions, I close my eyes and deflate. I almost feel as though I might be back to when she first made me soup, back when we barely knew each other. When we were new. The memory brings a small smile to my face. Now, though, there's so much distance between us, I don't know if we can ever go back to that. We've hurt each other more than enough, more than necessary. The door to the cabin opening stops my thinking.

"What? You're making food?" I hear Yelena's surprised voice and I instantly perk up, turning around.

Yelena skips into the kitchen, taking a sni of Wanda's cooking. Wanda freezes next to her, her back straight, spatula in hand.

"It's not for you." She mutters and Yelena looks up, surprised.

"Why not?"

"It's for Olivia." Wanda tells her and they both look my way. I pretend I'm examining the cushion next to me, hoping they cannot notice my blushing.

"Oh. Why don't I bring it to her, then?" Yelena wonders sweetly.

"No. It's not done." Wanda shoots her down quickly and I feel butterflies in my chest.

"Alright then, I guess I'll just go keep her company, then." Yelena quickly joins me, plopping down on the couch with a smile I'm not too fond of.

"Hello." She smiles broadly.

"Hello. You're enjoying yourself too much, you know." I lower my voice, casting a glance at Wanda in the kitchen. I catch her looking our way with a sour expression, but she quickly turns away when she notices me looking.

"Can you blame me?" Yelena chuckles so ly. "You should be treated right."

She gives me a wink and I feel my cheeks heat up. She looks proud of herself. Before I have the time to embarrass myself, I hear Wanda approach.

"Soup's done, Livv-Olivia." She stops right in front of Yelena and me, looking down at us, a bowl in her hands. She frowns at Yelena.

"Move."

"Move?" Yelena replies with a dry laugh.

"Yes. Move." Wanda smiles sweetly although there's nothing sweet about her right then.

Yelena and I share a look, Yelena looking slightly frazzled, but utterly amused at the same time. I inwardly groan, wondering what she's playing at now. She shu les over though, surprising me, and letting Wanda sit down in between us. I sit there silently, wrapped in my blanket like a cocoon. Wanda takes a deep breath and turns towards me, her warm eyes so ening as she looks at me. Her eyes look down at her own blanket is wrapped around me. She smiles a small, slightly nervous smile. Then, she looks down at the soup up at me and then down again, making sure she doesn't drop a single droplet of the warm, yellow substance. She blows so ly on the soup, steam rising in front of her face. I cannot look away. My eyes widen as she brings the spoon up towards me, pausing in front of my lips. She looks at me with an innocent smile. I crack open my mouth, letting her bring the spoon closer to me until it touches my lips, the warmth of it spreading through me instantly. It's carrot soup.

Once I've swallowed, Wanda quickly brings the spoon down, her cheeks rosy. I can't help the grin on my face. Then, Yelena leans forward, inserting herself into my field of vision. She looks positively delighted to the ninth.

"Oh my god." She giggles. "You two. Adorable. I want to puke."

To my surprise, Wanda chuckles. She sits back, crossing her legs, in a small smile remaining on her lips and I just wish I could stay in this moment forever. As most of my wishes, this doesn't come true, as the door makes a sound once again and the three of us turn our heads towards the sound. I almost think Wanda must've put something in the soup as I must be seeing things. Steve walks through the threshold, followed by Natasha and then Vision and Darcy.

"Hola amigos." Darcy greets us with a wave. "Wait. Amigas? I need to get back on Duolingo."

"Smells good in here." Steve notes with an amicable smile before he sees me, his smile growing. "Oh, you're back."

"You- you're- you- I stutter. "You're here."

"I am. Nat told me where you guys were. The jet needed a new part." He explains his eyes snapping towards Wanda quickly as he approaches.

I nod, still not over actually seeing him. I remember Natasha telling us he is alive, but seeing him... it's insane, and I feel o-center. Wanda places a hand on my knee, not looking at me. I realize she must've felt my emotions. I try to ignore her hand. Focus, Liv! Look back at Steve. He looks different. Older. More worn. He still seems just as kind, but he's changed. I once again wonder what has happened since Wanda and I were taken by Hydra until now. Clearly, he has been through a lot.

"So, you two have gotten into quite a lot of trouble, haven't you?" Steve looks at Wanda and me with a gleam in his eyes.

"I- er- we-" I stutter again, earning an amused look from Wanda.

"Yes, they have been bad." Yelena pipes up, grinning.

"Right- Steve." I loudly try to steer the conversation away from Wanda and me as I feel Vision's eyes on me, Wanda's hand still on my knee, and my face is burning up. "How's Bucky? Didn't bring him to tag along?"

Steve doesn't answer me straight away. His face drops and I feel cold. He opens his mouth, but closes it again.

"Bucky's... dead."

"He- what?" I gasp, the cold spreading through me and I feel slightly clammy. I feel Wanda's eyes on me.

"Three years ago. With me, on a mission." Steve says in a monotone voice, his eyes glassy.

"I'm... I'm sorry." I tell him, really meaning it.

I didn't know Bucky for long, but I always felt some sort of connection to him nonetheless. Maybe it was our shared experience with Hydra, but he always felt like he understood me. And thinking back, I think he really tried his best to help me through it. I feel awful. He shouldn't have been on that mission, because Steve shouldn't be. Wanda squeezes my thigh, interrupting my train of thought.

Don't blame yourself, Olivia! Feel her console me, but she doesn't succeed.

If I hadn't-

If I hadn't asked you. I never should have asked yo Wanda thinks and I feel a wave of her remorse wash over me. It's my fault. Again.

I glance at Wanda's pale face. Her eyes don't meet mine as she looks down at her hand on my thigh. I notice her chin tremble slightly as she tries to keep it together.

"Olivia, Wanda-" Steve's voice brings the both of us back into the room. "Hydra are coming for you. We need to prepare, because if my intel is correct, they'll win if we don't turn the tables on them. And quickly."

I frown, and look over at Wanda. She finally looks up from her hand and at Steve, her lips slightly parted.

"Wanda-" Vision begins, making us look at him, but he only has eyes for Wanda. "Like we talked about."

I turn to look at Wanda, feeling confused. Vision's words must apparently mean something to her, because she presses her lips together, her brows closely knitted together. She nods curtly.

"Okay." Wanda agrees in a thick voice full of emotion.

The silence presses on as the rest of us exchange questioning looks. I meet Darcy's eyes and she shrugs.

"Dramatic. Want to share what you talked about, maybe? I don't particularly feel like dying because of Hydra." Yelena breaks the silence, her accent melodically filling the silent room.

A/N: Hiiiiiiii aneeeeeeets! Just woke up from a nap so banging! I woke up with a nosebleed, how are you? <3

Stop why did I enjoy writing this chapter so much? Wanda's trying her hardest, bless her. I hope you liked this tooooooo much! :)

Anyway, here we are, it's too late to stop this train, darlings. We all safe and buckled up?

If yes, I will see you soon, my darlingest darlings xx