



xxi. Chaos Magic

A/N: Get ready for some badass Wanda!

Wanda Maximoff had one goal and one goal only. To destroy the infinity stones. They were dangerous things, and people like Thanos could not be allowed to have them. Although, if what she did to the mind stone was any indication, she was more dangerous. A part of her questioned whether or not she should have these powers, whether she deserved to have such magic in her hands.

But now was not the time to wonder such complicated things. Now was the time to save the world. Wanda steeled herself for what she was about to do. This was going to take everything she had.

It was ironic, really. The infinity stones had unlocked her power, and now her power, the very power they unlocked, would destroy them. How fitting.

She took off and landed in front of Thanos, no mercy visible on her face. He was one being in the world that did not deserve any mercy. Wanda's heart was beating fast. Here was this huge, powerful alien creature who had been around for years pulling at the strings. And they were a team of heroes, thrown together by unimaginable circumstances, just trying to keep Thanos from ripping people away from those they loved.

It was crazy, the kind of crazy that a very young Wanda would have thought was only possible in the stories her mother used to tell her. But she had learned early on, the day her life crumbled away, that anything was possible, both the good and the bad.

"Thanos, this is your endgame," Wanda cried, "surrender and let me destroy the gauntlet. You do not deserve its power."

"On the contrary, child, I am the only one who deserves the power. I am the only one who has fought for it and paid the price," Thanos replied.

Wanda's eyes were turning red, her powers twirling between her fingers like fairy lights the color of blood, "you paid no price, you murdered for the gauntlet. Now we are here to Avenge those you thought were worth less than power."

"You are powerful," Thanos acknowledged, "but if you killed me, you would turn down the chance of a lifetime. Let me fix the world the way I want, and I'll give you what you want. I'll give you your twin back. Your family back. Why, I might even be convinced to spare that girl you care about, the one who managed to bring everyone back."

Pietro. Wanda stopped. She could have Pietro back. Out of all the things that Thanos could have offered her, she could resist the temptation of all of them, of the whole world, but that. She missed her twin, missed him all the time, like a dull ache in her heart, an emptiness that could never be filled because it belonged to her brother and her brother alone.

But if she let Thanos win, other people could lose their brothers, or sisters, or parents, or family, or friends, or their soulmate. One of the people she loved, against all the people who were loved by someone else.

A few mere years ago, Wanda would have asked for Pietro back with no hesitation. But she had been forced to live without him, and she had survived. She could keep surviving. Pietro would want the world to be saved. He was a hero like that. And so was she.

"If you knew anything about my brother, you'd know he wouldn't want this," Wanda said, her voice rising with anger.

Her magic encircled the infinity gauntlet, stronger than she had ever had it before. It was fueled by her desire to save the world, to protect her friends, to honor her brother. To be the person she wanted to be; a hero.

Wanda's powers were strong, but she never would have been able to hold on if it weren't for her friends. They attacked Thanos with all their might, distracting them, making him focus on them instead of using the gauntlet against her. Because of them, there was far less resistance.

Still, the stones did not want their power to fade. They had been around for so long, had been so powerful. They had their own self-sustaining power, they were not just tools. Wanda pulled all the magic from her soul, fueled with all the emotion she had, and attacked as relentlessly as possible.

The infinity stones, the gauntlet itself, they began to break under her focused magic. It was the complete opposite of Lagos. She felt in control, and as though nothing could touch her. The cracking continued, and then Wanda heard a loud pulse in her brain, and a wave of energy shot out.

The gauntlet had broken apart, turning to dust as it had done to so many people. It collapsed on Thanos's hand. Wanda watched in wonder as she sunk to her knees. They had done it.

Thanos let out a roar, but before he could do anything, a blue blur lept up and sliced at his neck with a sword. Nebula rolled on the ground, looking at the clean-cut she had made straight through her torturer's neck. She whispered, "For Gamora!"

Then, Groot tossed his video game, which hit Thanos's head and sent it tumbling on the body, which also fell to the ground. The tree said, "I am Groot!"

Wanda didn't know what that meant, she just knew they had won. Her vision was blurry and she honestly just wanted to go to sleep. She collapsed, but two friends were there to catch her. Maria, the one who had actually caught her, and Clint, who was looking at her with a mix of awe and concern for her health.

"Wands, damn, I knew you were powerful but....." Clint trailed off.

"You what," Wanda said sleepily, her eyes closing as she whispered, "you didn't see that coming."

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Wanda woke up in a bed in what looked to be the Avengers infirmary. She wasn't hooked up to anything, and nothing hurt, which seemed to be a good sign. Standing up, she found her jacket hanging on the chair beside her and shrugged it on.

She raced downstairs to find a meeting in session at the huge table, which Nick Fury was at the head of. Head down, not wanting to interrupt anything, she slid into the open chair beside Auralie.

"What'd I miss," Wanda whispered.

Auralie looked over in surprise, "you've been out for a day. Scott's driving back to the west coast to make sure all his family and friends are ok. Some of them will just have been rematerialized. And Okoye and T'Challa left for Wakanda right after the battle to make sure the people are fine. Right now we've just been filling Nick and Maria in on everything."

"Alright everyone, I'm glad you saved the world and everything, but we have business to take care of," Fury announced, and the chatter at the table quieted down.

"First off, the government is still mad at you. Fortunately, you have Hill, me, and the remainder of Shield arguing your case. Between the Avengers and Shield, I think we have a good chance of getting the accords changed or removed," Fury said, "but before we can do that, a few of us have announcements to make. There are going to be some changes to the team."

Auralie seemed surprised. She had known some of her friends (Clint) wanted an actual retirement, but she hadn't known exactly what most of them were planning.

Tony stood up, "alright, listen, everyone, you're all my friends, but I can't keep doing this. If you ever need me, I'll be happy to help, but not as a day to day thing. I'll stay on as an engineer and a consultant, but I'm not running missions every week. I want to get married, raise a family, keep mentoring underdogs here." Peter, who was sitting next to Tony, flushed at being called "underdogs."

"We get it, Tony, you've given so much to this team, you deserve to live your life," Auralie said, smiling at her friend, "you and Pepper deserve to be happy."

"Yeah. We're gonna take a big honeymoon. Not sure where, but," Tony shrugged, smiling and sitting down.

"I'm retiring too! I've got chickens to look after, and kids too!" Clint called, and they all laughed. Clint was smiling again, and Auralie knew that it was because he had called his family and found out they were back.

"I have Asgard to look after and the nine realms to protect," Thor boomed, "I'm going to be a little busy. Dr. Banner has said he will help me set up my people on Earth." Bruce nodded. Auralie was sad that her oldest friends seemed to be going their own separate ways, but it was bound to happen. She at least had Steve and Nat. But then the two of them surprised her as well.

"I'm stepping down," Steve said, "I've been fighting this war for so long..... I want to find a place in Brooklyn. I'll always help if you all are in trouble, but I want some peace."

"I'm taking a break too," Natasha announced. Auralie opened her mouth, then closed it again. These were two people who had been positive influences and friends of hers for years. They deserved a break if they wanted one.

"Sam already said he would help lead the Avengers," Steve announced, "but I want you all to help him, to work as a team, so it's not one leader, but each of you stepping up when the time is right. That said..... All..... if you're staying on..... you'd be the last original Avenger left."

"I'm staying," Auralie said fiercely, "and don't worry Steve, I'll make sure it all goes alright. But who is staying?"

It turned out Rhodey, Sam, Bucky, Wanda, Auralie, and Peter were all going to the Guardians of the Galaxy, who were heading back to space. After saying goodbye and promising to keep in touch, the rogue team of space adventurer's climbed onto their starship.

That was when Bucky let out a cry of alarm as Rocket Raccoon lept up, grabbed his arm, and hopped on the spaceship screaming, "I told you I'd get that arm!"

Auralie covered her mouth to hide her laughter. Sam didn't bother hiding his. Wanda turned to Bucky and cried, "are you ok!"

Bucky sighed, "yeah. Shuri's really smart and had the foresight to make multiple arms in case something happened. Still, never thought I would have a robotic arm stolen by a talking raccoon."

Auralie said, "I have spent most of my life dealing with insane scenarios, and talking raccoon that steals prosthetics never once entered my mind either my friend."

A/N: Nebula deserved to cut Thanos's head off. So she did. Also, Wanda was badass, and the Avengers underdog. So she did. Also changes. Wow, this chapter was pretty long. Oh, yeah, and Rocket got that arm.