



xxvii. Following A Shadow

"We're here," Sam called from the pilot seat. Wanda thought it was a testament to his skill that he managed to navigate based on her vague directions. But then again, Sam was very competent, so his skills were not as surprising as they seemed.

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"Great, another creepy place to break into and another world destroying bad guy to stop," Bucky muttered.

"There's Maria's car," Wanda said, "they've probably already gone inside. Come on, let's land this bird and follow them." Though Sam was the leader usually, Wanda had taken the lead on this one. It was her soulmate they were following a er all.

"Alright everyone, let's move out," Pietro said, floating through the side of the quinjet as they landed. Wanda let out a sigh. Not even twenty-four hours since he had returned and Pietro was already using his ghost powers like that. He knew exactly how annoying he was being, of course, that was why he did it.

The other three exited the quinjet. Pietro was waiting for them and called impatiently, "let's go, slowpokes, we have a world to save."

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It was such a Pietro thing to say, and Wanda felt herself giving a little smile at her brother. She really had missed him.

The Maximo woman took the lead, a swirl of magic running around her hand lighting their way. Pietro floated beside her, emitting a slight blue-grey glow of his own. Sam and Bucky brought up the rear. Both men were armed. Wanda, being a witch, didn't need a gun, and Pietro was a ghost and therefore could not be harmed.

They made their way through the dark corridors. Three sets of footprints could be seen in the dust, illuminated by Wanda's magic. One set of large footprints, and two sets of smaller footprints that looked like the ones made by standard regulation combat boots. Wanda knew one of those sets of footprints was Auralie's. Auralie loved combat boots. Maria actually did too. It was one of the things the sisters had in common.

Sometimes siblings had the weirdest but best things in common, Wanda reflected.

Speaking of weird sibling moments, Pietro decided to fill the awkward silence, "Hey sis, remember how when we were little, we used to argue over silly little things? Like who got the last cookie."

Wanda snorted indignantly, "you were arguing, I was being perfectly reasonable."

"As if! You were just as guilty as I was, even more so," Pietro argued.

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"I was sitting on the couch reading fantasy stories. I asked for the last cookie. Papa said that I could have it because you ate one earlier when you came home from school. Then you ran into the room and grabbed it o the plate," Wanda cried.

"LIAR," Pietro hu ed.

Sam and Bucky exchanged grins. Wanda looked at them and asked, "what?"

Sam shrugged, "we just haven't really seen this side of you Wanda, you're always so serious."

"I am sometimes," Wanda agreed, "but anyone who's ever had a sibling knows that though you love each other, you won't always get along."

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"That makes sense," Bucky said, "but still, you usually just like to read by yourself. Even more, than Ali does."

Wanda grinned, "then she clearly never told you about the time we got into a pillow fight and accidentally broke that vase Steve gave us as a housewarming gi ."

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"The horrible one that he regi ed a er Tony gave it to him?" Bucky asked.

"That's the one," Wanda confirmed.

Bucky smirked, "yeah, that was totally accidental."

Wanda rolled her eyes, "it was."

"Who broke it?" Sam asked.

"We still don't know. She says it was me, but I think she was closer to it at the time," Wanda replied.

Pietro was listening to the conversation and smiling, for once not jumping in and talking with them. He was happy that his sister had found happiness and someone who loved her. She deserved it.

They went deeper into the catacombs, and their good cheer faded fast. This place was unsettling, and it felt as though the rules of the universe were suspended here, so anything could happen and not in a good way.

Wanda crept forward, towards what seemed to be the final chamber. She felt a presence there, but she didn't have time to see who before she rounded the corner, only to find a gun pointed at her head.

Maria let out a sigh of relief and lowered the weapon. She said, "Wanda, I didn't think that was you."

"It's me," Wanda replied, "Sam, Bucky, and Pietro, he's a ghost, long story, don't ask, are here too. We came to help Auralie. Where is she? Why are you not with her?"

"Lucian," Maria sco ed, "he said I couldn't go through the portal, that it would kill me. Auralie told me to wait here, and I couldn't risk it."

"Well, you might not be able to go through, but I am a witch. I'll go," Wanda announced.

"By yourself," Sam cried, "I thought we were doing this as a team?"

"We were, but I don't want you or Bucky to risk your lives like that. Stay here with Maria and make sure no hostile forces come through. That includes Lucian if he comes through alone," Wanda commanded.

"But you're still going alone," Bucky protested, "what if something happens? There's a reason this is a team and not one person."

"Auralie will be with me," Wanda reminded him, "and Pietro is coming too. He's a ghost, so the laws of physics do not apply to him."

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"Yeah," Pietro agreed, "my sister and I just got each other back. We aren't losing each other again. Nothing is going to separate the Maximo family."

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Wanda groaned, "this does not mean you can haunt my apartment."

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"Does too," Pietro stuck out his tongue.

"Then you have to pay rent," Wanda shot back. Before he could respond, she focused her magic and stepped through the portal, Pietro right behind her.

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A/N: This chapter ended up being oddly lighthearted, but I guess that's what happens when Pietro is here for comedy.

Continue reading next part