



xxxii. Auralie Maximo

"Wife," Elory echoed, momentarily thrown o. She had been prepared for Auralie Shadow, the broken hero girl that had gone against Elory. She had not been prepared for Auralie Maximo, the Avenger woman with a witch wife to protect and support her.

"My wife, my soulmate, the love of my life," Wanda confirmed, "and it would do you well not to harm her, or harm my world."

"You think you can kill me, little witch. You fancy yourself powerful," Elory taunted.

Wanda drew herself up to her full height. Elory was still taller, older, and dangerous, but Wanda had decided long ago that she was done making reckless choices out of fear, "I have faced powerful beings before. I fought with the Avengers to stop Ultron from destroying the world, which is a similar goal to yours. I fought against Thanos and destroyed the infinity stones."

Elory twitched a bit, a sign of surprise. Perhaps the witch was more dangerous than the villain thought. After all, not just anyone could destroy the infinity stones.

"Well Maximo, I do believe you may have power and potential. I also believe that you are stupid and sentimental enough not to want to join me and leave your wife to burn with the rest of your world. Pity, you could have been strong," Elory mused, "so, I suppose that only one of us can leave here alive."

Wanda nodded her jaw tense, "that is exactly what I was thinking.

A sphere of magic quickly came to Wanda's summons, and she only kept it between her hands for a moment before hurling it at Elory, who created an invisible shield, blocking the power. Then the evil one clenched her fist, and the air around Wanda began dissipating. She could not breathe.

Fighting back, Wanda let out a huge pulse of energy that sent Elory stumbling and allowed Wanda to breathe again. The witch relentlessly launched into another attack. Three blasts of scarlet power were sent into Elory's chest. The executioner of worlds staggered back but quickly regained her footing and called out a spell in a language that Wanda had not heard, which caused tendrils of pale magic as white as ice to loop around Wanda's arms, her legs, her fingers.

It was like the rain all over again, and hell, Wanda was not standing for it. She thought of the scars on her neck, the ones on Auralie's hands, their shaken faith in the world, and the emotion caused red magic to push back the white, making it crumble and fall like little pebbles in a child's tower.

"You are formidable," Elory gasped.

Wanda did not reply. She made it a habit not to reply to the villains goading. Instead, she created a force field of magic, which sent Elory flying back, as well as clearing some of the smoke from the area, which was very helpful.

"Bitch," Elory spat, getting back up.

"I'm not the bitch," Wanda replied, unable to resist just one jab at the monster. She sent another blast, but this time Elory deflected, sending a blast of her own back.

Wanda dodged easily, but Elory opened a portal beneath her. The portal opened again in the sky above, and she was falling towards the ground. Catching herself with her magic, she landed, only to have to dodge three more blasts. Though Wanda's opponent was vile, selfish, and cruel, she did have great skill with magic. That did not make life any easier on Wanda.

Fortunately, Wanda had something Elory did not. Wanda was not alone in this life, whereas Elory cared for nothing or no one.

Pietro, Wanda's dear twin, had arrived (finally, you would think someone with superspeed wouldn't take so long) and was ready to help. He, taking full advantage of the ghost situation, performed a battle move that was flashy, but effective. He appeared out of thin air. Only, instead of yelling boo, he yelled a battle cry that really just sounded like he was making loud sounds.

It did its job well though. Elory was startled, allowing Wanda to get in two more hits. Pietro shot her a grin and she couldn't help but smile back. Pietro, for all his annoying comments, was invaluable to her, and she made a mental note to tell him how much she missed him, loved him, and appreciated his help.

Elory looked down at her dark dress, which was ripped at the midri from the battle, exposing pale flesh and red blood. She raised her head, eyes alight with anger, and launched a new onslaught of magic, throwing Pietro's ghost around like a rag doll (which he couldn't feel, so it was really just a nuisance) and putting immense pressure on Wanda.

Wanda could feel her magic cracking under the strain, but she thought, no, this is not how it will end. She will not win. She will not take my world. She will not toss my brother around like he's nothing. She WILL NOT KILL MY WIFE!

This emotion, this strength in her love for Auralie and for Pietro, this fueled Wanda. It had occurred to her before and would occur to her again later, that some of her strongest moments came with strong emotions. The pain of Pietro's death..... the determination to join Steve and Auralie during the Civil War..... her need to protect everyone when she destroyed the infinity stones. And there was no emotion stronger than love, and no one she felt it for more than Auralie.

Wanda's power then took the lead, crushing down on Elory in a wave of scarlet magic. Elory tried to hold out, but Wanda was gaining and gaining and then another force added to her own. Auralie had struggled to her feet and was adding shadows to the mix, shadows that hammered away at Elory's power.

Together, they were unstoppable. Wanda's power, fueled by the sight of Auralie at her side, broke Elory's. The dark sorceress collapsed to the ground, and Auralie let out a sob of relief at seeing the creature of her nightmares finally dead.

"Wanda..... oh Wanda....." Auralie burst into tears. Wanda rushed to embrace her, pressing a chaste kiss to the other girl's cheek.

"Love, darling, my wife," Wanda said, "it will be ok."

"I killed him Wanda. I killed my brother," Auralie said, pulling away. Part of her wondered if this would change anything. If Wanda would love a murderer.

Wanda just took Auralie's hand, "oh dearest, I'm so so sorry. Come here." The witch pulled the other girl close, and Auralie wiped at her eyes. Of course, Wanda still accepted her. Auralie took deep breaths. What she had done was terrible, but she would learn to live with it, as she had so many things. She would have to. She could not live in pain forever. Though.....

"Do I deserve to suffer for it. Do you think he would hate me?" Auralie asked.

Wanda replied, her voice full of pure honesty, "oh Ali, who can say. What's done is done and we must learn to live with the consequences. He did bad things, but he tried to make it right near the end. All we can do is remember him as best we can. And we will do that. Now, we have to let his soul rest."

"Thank you for coming for me," Auralie said.

Wanda smiled, a smile full of love, "I'll always come for you." She leaned in, her lips meeting Auralie's in a rose petal so kiss.

Behind them, Pietro coughed, "excuse me."

They turned and Auralie's eyes went wide, "Pietro! You're here! Man, it's been forever! Wow, and you're a ghost."

"Yeah," the speedster replied.

"Ghosts are real," Auralie said, in awe, "my inner fantasy geek is squealing."

Pietro nodded, "cool. But, let me just say something. YOU TWO ARE MARRIED? SINCE WHEN? AND WHY WASN'T I INVITED? AND WHY DID NO ONE CONSULT ME ON THIS?"

"You weren't around," Wanda said, "and we've only been married a few months." Auralie, I'm sorry your brother in law is being a dumbass."

"It's ok, he's family, I have to put up with him," Auralie said with a slight grin. Pietro made a dramatically ended face, and they all laughed a little brokenly, Auralie wiping at the remainder of her tears.

Then they heard a groaning sound and saw a broken, disfigured, half corpse struggling to its feet. Elory screamed at them, and they all jumped back before a gun went off and the bullet tore through Elory's head. She collapsed, dead for good, and Elory the Executioner was no more.

Auralie whirled around to see Maria Hill, standing there, looking as badass as ever as she holstered her gun.

"Maria," Auralie cried, her tears starting again, "how in the hell.... how are you here? The portal, it could have killed you!"

Maria shrugged, "it was an unpleasant, slightly painful experience. But, I thought you might need me, and it turns out, I was right. So it was worth it. Besides, Sam and Bucky are fully capable of guarding the portal."

"Sam and Bucky came?" Auralie questioned.

Wanda nodded, "yes, we were all concerned about you."

"With good reason. You all ok?" Maria asked.

Auralie took a deep breath and looked around, "you know what..... I'm not sure. But I want to be. I believe I can be."

"And we believe in you too," Pietro said. He seemed to have gotten over not being invited to the wedding fairly quickly.

Wanda turned and offered her hand to her wife, "well, are you ready to go home?"

Auralie nodded, "yeah, I think I am." She took Wanda's hand. Auralie Maximo, with her sister, brother in law, and wife at her side, began the walk home.

As they walked away, Auralie did not look back. But Maria Hill did.

She thought of another place, a decade ago, in Sokovia. A young girl, crushed amongst the rubble, barely alive, and broken-hearted. Maria had made a promise back then, a promise to make sure Auralie Shadow's heart would not get broken again. And now, through ten years of chaos, Elory was defeated and the thing with Lucian had come to a close. And Auralie was happy with Wanda.

Maria smiled and turned away. Sometimes you had a good family from birth, like how Wanda had Pietro. Other times, you found one. Auralie and Maria had found each other and gone from there. Ten years ago, a Shield Agent and a superpowered teen had become sisters.

Maria knew she would never regret it.

A/N: No this is not the end of the book. This is just the ending of a huge chapter of Auralie's life, a chapter where Elory and Lucian and all they did influence her subconsciously, and a period where Maria was very scared of Auralie getting broken apart again. These next chapters will focus more on Auralie and Wanda putting themselves back together a er all of this, as well as shenanigans from ghost Pietro, because comedy.