



## ii. Maria Hill

Maria seemed surprised for a moment, but then sat Auralie down and placed an arm around her while the younger girl cried. Maria wasn't really the motherly type, but she had seen enough destruction and ruin to know when someone needed comforting. But Auralie was not one to cry easily, so she dried her tears and looked the agent dead in the eye. It was not a look of rebellion, or even one of wariness, but one of respect, one that showed she was paying attention to the older woman.

"Apologies Miss Hill," Auralie said, her voice still hoarse from crying, "it's just, my mum and dad have been gone for so long, and Lucian has been gone too. Is he really alive? I don't want to get my hopes up for nothing."

Maria looked at the other girl in shock. Auralie seemed so frail at first, she was small and it looked like the thin bones of her arms could be broken in seconds. But there was steel inside of her, and she looked at Maria like someone who knew she could take whatever happened. Auralie had been on her own for a long time, and had learned to take care of herself.

"How could Luca be alive," Auralie asked, "how do you know? And what's Shield?"

"Shield is in charge of protecting the world from threats, especially out of the ordinary threats. It has a long ass name that I really don't care about," Maria replied.

Auralie smiled a bit, but got back to business quickly, "and my brother?"

"DNA evidence led to a crime scene. An entire block of a forest was swallowed up by the ground and all we got out of it was one little hair. But it was enough. Your brother was there, and our suspicious say he was the one who did it," Maria explained. She wasn't gentle, because she didn't know how to be. Maria Hill was a fighter, and she worried she would make the teen cry. But Auralie was also a fighter, and took the news with her head held high.

"He's alive," she whispered again, "and a criminal. A villain. But he's 13 years old. How?"

"We believe that your brother is, not like the others," Maria continued, "he has the power to cause earthquakes. I am here because I need to know if you know where he got them. Did he have them before."

Auralie shook her head, "NO! Not until..... my 7th birthday! It was an earthquake that destroyed our house! Something unlocked his power and he couldn't control it! That's what happened!"

Maria nodded, "thank you. And do you have any of these powers?"

Auralie went tense. She liked Maria, liked the way the woman looked her in the eye and didn't treat her like a little kid. She had a good feeling about the agent. But Auralie didn't want to reveal her secret, she was too afraid.

Maria seemed to sense her hesitation, "It's ok Auralie. You can tell me. We help people like you. Just a year ago, we were helping Tony Stark, the billionaire, out of an issue where he became a superhero. He has a glowing thing in his chest that powers his super-suit. He's pretty cool. Of course, he ignored our advice and revealed his identity, but..... we won't make you a prisoner because of your abilities. Trust me. My friend Phil was the one to deal with Stark, and I can call him if you need a reference."

Auralie nodded. She decided to take the risk and trust Hill. Slowly she held up her palm, and an orb of light formed in the girl's hand. She tossed it into the sky and mentally controlled the light so it hovered for a second, illuminating the room before fading away.

Maria looked up in wonder, "Auralie, that's really cool. Did you discover it on your 7th birthday?"

"Yeah," Auralie said, "but once it came out, once I realized what it was, I felt complete. Like it had been in me my whole life, but I wasn't really myself without it. It was very odd."

Maria nodded. She had no powers, but the feeling Auralie was describing was similar to how she felt when she had first picked up a weapon to fight for what was right.

"You won't imprison me," Auralie asked.

"No," Maria shook her head, "we just want your help finding your brother. We doubt he, power or not, is on his own. It's likely someone is using him, and we need to save him. We think he will let you find him, because after all, you are his twin."

Auralie nodded, "it's a good theory."

Maria smiled a bit, "so, will you help us?"

The blonde looked at Maria, her eyes narrowed, "and after I help? Will I be sent back here? I want to make a difference in this world agent Hill, I want to help people stand up for what they believe. I can't do that here. Your Shield could help me do that. You want my help, you have to train me."

"Alright, it's a deal," Maria's grinned at the younger girl, and how her voice hadn't wavered once during the negotiation. The child was definitely Shield material. Fury would approve. He had wanted her trained anyways because of her powers, but her character made her even better. Maria could already imagine having Auralie around to make insights and train with Maria. She wanted to introduce Auralie to Clint and Natasha, and let them train her with weapons. She wanted the girl to join Shield.

Auralie smiled back, so shy, "thank you Agent Hill."

"I think Shield can do better than train you. You'll have a family there, I just know it," the agent replied, eyes sparkling with excitement, "and you can call me Maria."

"Maria," Auralie repeated, "alright. You can call me Ali if you want."

Maria nodded and said, "Ok Ali, here's the plan. We have a general idea of where your brother is. We need you to go around town and inquire about him."

"Got it," Auralie replied, "where is he?"

Maria grinned, "I'm guessing you've never been to the little nation that is Sokovia?"

"Never heard of it," Auralie answered.

"Well it isn't much," Maria said, "but it's where the mission is. Welcome to Shield Agent Auralie Shadow."

Agent Auralie Shadow. The blonde smiled. She liked the sound of that.

**A/N: I love Maria Hill. She's such a bad ass, and I love her and Auralie's relationship. I just figured they would hit it off from the start. Their sisterhood will be very important to the story, especially in this first part.**

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