



xxii. There Was An Idea

Auralie, Steve and Tony were all sitting in the conference room in the war-torn helicarrier. The shock and pain of losing Coulson hovered over them like a shadow. Steve and Tony hadn't known him that well, but they had respected and liked him. Auralie had known him better, and she knew that his death would have an impact on Shield, especially those who knew him best, like Director Fury and Maria. Maria herself was supervising the repairs because the system had been damaged in the attack. Natasha was with a recovering Clint, Thor and Banner were missing, and the three in the room were all focused on the man standing in the doorway.

"Director," Auralie said, not knowing what he was going to say, but wanting to hear it, even if it didn't help them at all.

"These were in Phil Coulson's jacket," Fury said to Steve, "I guess he never did get you to sign them." He threw the Captain America vintage trading cards that Phil had been so proud of on to the table. They were painted with the crimson of Phil's blood.

Steve didn't have the words to respond.

"Our communications are down, they have the Tesseract, Loki escaped, Thor and Banner are gone," Nick listed wearily, "lost my one good eye."

Auralie knew what he meant, and her heart throbbed with the pain of losing another friend. But she didn't cry, because death was something they all had to cope with, and because in the end, she was so shattered already, she didn't have enough left in her to cry.

"Maybe I had that coming," Fury sighed.

Auralie and Steve looked at each other, and at Tony, who was holding in his sadness. They looked anywhere but the bloodstained cards on the table.

"Yes, we were using the Tesseract to build weapons, but I wasn't putting all of my effort into that because I was gambling on something even bigger," Fury explained.

Auralie's eyes went wide. There was only one plan that Fury could be talking about. Only one idea so crazy and amazing that only someone like Nick Fury could ever put into play. An idea that Auralie had hoped for, but not even she had the guts to try and bring it to reality. Hope thudded in her heart, a dull tapping that filled her with thoughts of joy for the future.

Fury began, placing a hand on Tony's chair, "there was an idea, Stark and Shadow know this, called the Avengers Initiative. The idea was to bring together a group of remarkable people, to see if they could become something more. To see if they could work together when we needed to, to fight the battles that we never could."

Auralie met her boss's eyes and nodded to him, showing she understood why he did what he did.

"Phil Coulson died still believing in that idea, in heroes," Fury said, going to look out the window.

When none of them responded he sighed, dismissing them, "well, it's an old-fashioned notion."

The three stayed for a moment, but when he said nothing else, all three stood up, quietly, solemnly, and exited the room. They found themselves in a deserted corridor of the helicarrier, standing quietly together, contemplating.

"Was he married?" Steve asked.

"No," Tony replied, "there was a cellist, I think."

"Yeah, there was," Auralie murmured.

Steve nodded, "he was a hero."

"He was out of his league," Tony scowled. Auralie gasped, her hand flying up to cover her mouth at Tony's disrespect.

"For doing his job?" Steve questioned angrily.

"For taking on Loki alone," Tony replied, "he should have waited. He should have....."

"Is this the first time you've lost a soldier?" Steve asked.

Tony yelled, "we are not soldier's. I'm not marching to Fury's fife."

"Me either," Steve said, "he has the same blood on his hands that Loki does. But we can't let the Tesseract fall into the wrong hands, and we have to keep innocent people from getting hurt."

Tony glared at Steve who glared right back. Auralie looked between them and saw they were going to yell again. She wasn't having it, not this time, so she yelled, "STOP! Steve is right, we do have to keep protecting the people. Even if we don't have Thor and Banner to help. We need to get Clint and Nat and work together to stop Loki. Understood."

"Yeah," Tony said. Steve nodded in agreement, and they began debating what Loki's next move would be. The three of them began to discuss the attack in Stuttgart, and how it fits into the grand scheme of things.

"That was just the previews," Tony cried, coming to a realization, "and this is opening night. And Loki, he's a full tail diva. He wants flowers, he wants parades, he wants a monument in the sky with his name written on....."

Steve and Auralie both looked at the other man with a mix of amusement and realization. Tony realized why and said, "son of a bitch."

"Alright," Auralie ordered, once they realized where the god of mischief was going to launch his attack, "Steve, you go grab Clint and Natasha for help, and take one of the Shield jets to New York. We can't waste time trying to find Bruce and Thor: if they show, they show. Tony and I will go to Stark Tower and keep Loki distracted. Be prepared to fight."

"I thought I was the Captain here," Steve said wryly.

Auralie rolled her eyes, "yeah, you are, but I came up with the plan first. Now go recruit some assassins." Steve gave the teenager a nod and ran off.

Tony looked at the blonde girl questioningly, "How're you planning to get up to the tower Beacon, I didn't think you could fly?"

"I can't," Auralie said, very matter of fact, "but you can, and you're going to give me a ride."

Tony grinned, "you sure, I'm a bit of a crazy flier."

"I'm certain," was Auralie's answer.

Tony looked at her for a moment, then said, "well, I have to say, you have some guts. It's really impressive actually."

Auralie smiled at her new friend, "thanks."

"Sure thing," Tony smirked, "now hop on Eclipse, we have an invasion to stop."

A/N: The "there was an idea" quote made me think of IW and now I'm sad. But I did get up another chapter.

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