



### iii. Searching in the Dark

Auralie wandered the streets of Sokovia, looking for any sign of her brother. The sun was going down, and Auralie shivered in the brisk wind. A boy her age with unruly brown hair ran passed her, almost knocking her over. She would have hit the pavement if it weren't for a girl her age with long brown hair and green eyes.

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The girl smiled, "sorry about my brother. He never slows down. He's kind of an idiot like that. I'll yell at him for you."

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Auralie nodded, too dazed to speak. The young woman helped her stand up straight, then ran after the boy, an exasperated expression on her face. Auralie continued on, figuring that the strangers didn't matter, she would never see them again, even if it was a weird moment. She had to focus on the task at hand. She would save her brother, then she would join Maria at Shield.

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Somehow, Auralie knew it would be harder than it seemed.

She wandered the streets, asking people if they had seen her brother, saying that he had similar hair to her, describing what he should look like. She said she had been out to get coffee and had lost track of him. Saying that she didn't know where she was going. No one had seen him, but not one suspected her.

Auralie knew from both reading and experience that people saw what they wanted to see. That it was rare that people thought of a 13 year old as a spy, or a super powered individual, or anything more than an ordinary person. People were fascinated by the extraordinary, but couldn't tell when something unusual was looking them in the face.

Auralie figured her brother's captor knew what he or she was doing. Sokovia was small, and mostly unknown, but still crowded enough for people to blend in. The person in charge was clearly no amateur. Auralie took a deep breath. She hoped she could find her brother without meeting the person in charge.

She pulled her sweatshirt sleeves down to cover her hands. If she didn't find Luca soon, it would be dark, and she would need to find a place to stay the night. Auralie knew Maria was also in the city, tracking her, ready to intervene at a moment's notice. But Maria hadn't mentioned having a place to stay the night.

Auralie sighed. It was probably time to find the agent. Searching in the dark wouldn't be of any help.

Then heard a gentle voice behind her whisper, "Ali."

Auralie whirled around to see him standing there, a tight smile on his face. He looked similar to when she last saw him, but older and more mature. She reached out to take his hand. It was there. He was solid. He was real. He was alive.

Auralie was in his arms in a moment, holding her brother. She had thought she was alone, but she wasn't. He was alive, and she would bring him home to her.

"I thought you were dead," Auralie said, "how did you survive? When they pulled me from the wreckage they said I was the only survivor."

"Someone else saved me, but they didn't realize you were alive, or had unlocked your powers," Lucian whispered. They had broken apart and were now sitting on a bench, under a streetlight, grinning like fools.

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Auralie cocked her head, "how'd you know about those?"

Lucian smiled, "you showed them to me, remember. Our birthday. You beat me to washing our hands."

"Oh yeah," Auralie remembered, "and you have powers too."

"Yes," he responded, "creating earthquakes. It's actually quite cool."

"I can control light, which is also cool," Auralie added, "so who was it that saved you."

"Not important," Lucian said, "what's important is catching up on every moment that I missed with my sister."

Auralie frowned, "well, I almost got trampled earlier looking for you, so thanks for that. I've been in an orphanage in New York City for the past 6 years, and I spend a lot of time reading. Those are the key points I think. Oh, and I'm a Ravenclaw."

Lucian smiled, "why did I know your key points would have something to do with Harry Potter."

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"Hush up," Auralie smacked him lightly on the shoulder, "you love me. But speaking of Harry Potter, has anyone ever told you you look like Draco Malfoy?"

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Lucian sighed, "yes Auralie, they have. Is there anything else I should know?"

"I'm an introvert and a lesbian," she offered.

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Lucian nodded, "alright, thank you for getting the key points out of the way. But honestly Ali, I've missed you. It's so good to have you back."

"Yeah," Auralie rested her head on her brother's shoulder, "I've missed you. Life has been miserable without you and mum and dad. I've been safe, but what's the point if you don't have anyone you love with you."

"I know," he said, "and I get it. But Ali, how did you know to find me here? How did you get here? I know for a fact our twin powers can't be that strong if we each thought the other was dead for six years."

"I made a friend," Auralie joked, "be proud of me."

"I am," he said, "but seriously, what happened?"

"I'll tell you if you tell me who saved you and raised you," Auralie countered.

"Ok."

"Wait, really?"

Lucian smiled, "I would actually love for you to meet her. She would want to know you. She could protect you and keep us together."

"Oh that sounds nice," Auralie lied. How could Lucian not know what he was doing? What had this woman done to him?

"We should go," Lucian suddenly said, getting to his feet.

Auralie cocked her head, "now?"

"Yes," he agreed, "she'll want to meet you as soon as possible."

Auralie hesitated for a moment before standing up to join him. She had a bad feeling about this, but she was even more afraid of losing her brother again. She just had to hope Maria was following or tracking her in case Lucian's savior decided to get violent.

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Maria Hill watched the girl and her brother leave. If they were going to the boy's hideout, it complicated things. Yes it would lead the agent right towards the boy's boss, but it would also make it harder to protect the girl. And though Maria's mission was to stop the bad guys, she wanted to protect the girl more, since the girl had so little and so much spirit.

**A/N: Maria and Ali are going to end up being such great sisters eventually! Even though he's my character, I hate Lucian, and you will too soon. But that's not what this is about. The boy who knocked Auralie over: Pietro. The girl who helped her up: Wanda. Auralie has met her future soulmate and doesn't even know it. Whether they will make the connection some day remains to be figured out by me, the author who isn't sure what to do, but wanted to write it.**

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