



## vi. Waking Up

Auralie found herself in a room, and knew she was alive, because everything was sore. Her eyes adjusted to the bright lights, and she realized she was in some sort of hospital. Everything was white, from the walls, to the sheets of the bed she was on. The only color was the blue tiles on the floor and the buttons on several machines lined up against the walls.

A nurse came into the room, and saw Auralie, who had sat up without much pain. She was tall, with dark skin and eyes, and black hair that was braided down her back. A name tag read Amanda. The nurse smiled, "hello Miss Shadow, you had quite an adventure."

"Where am I," the blonde asked the woman.

Amanda strode over to Auralie's bedside, "Shield headquarters. Maria Hill brought you. You should have been killed, but your powers disintegrated some of the rubble and saved you. We mostly fixed you up, and kept you under sedation for the past week to speed up the healing. You should be alright now."

Even in her groggy state, Auralie noticed a few things. It was a week later, she was at Shield, so she was back in the States, and the nurse knew about her powers. She needed to know what had happened with Elory and Lucian, even though she was dreading it. And for that, she needed to find Maria.

"Can I go see Maria," Auralie asked.

Amanda nodded, "sure, you seem to be alright. Just take it slow and don't be surprised if you hurt for a few days."

Auralie's pain was nothing compared to her shattered heart, but whatever. She gave Amanda a smile, and managed to get to her feet without falling over.

Amanda left the room calling, "if you start feeling worse, come back. But some Advil should help with the bruises."

The nurse had left Auralie's normal clothing on the table by the bed, and her shoes were on the floor. She dressed quickly, ignoring the pain and keeping from flinching. As she slipped her black sneakers on, she felt a bit better, more awake and alert. Then she went to find Maria.

She didn't have to go far. Maria was sitting just outside the infirmary room, in a hard backed plastic chair, but as soon as Auralie came out, the brunette stood up and hugged the girl. It was a perfect hug that was soothing, but didn't hurt Auralie at all.

"Hey there Agent Shadow," Maria said.

Auralie smiled, "hi Maria. Are you ok?"

"Aside from worrying about you," Maria replied, "I mean, I'm not the girl who almost died, yet somehow came out with minimal injuries. Damn your powers are cool."

Auralie looked into the woman's brown eyes, "thanks, no one's ever told me that before."

"Well here at Shield, the abnormal is normal, and we accept people of all kinds. Not all of us are this cool, but our senior officers tend to make those idiots shut up. I mean, powers like yours are still very rare, but we won't judge you for it. We will train you to use them to help people though," Maria explained.

"Alright," the blonde said, "does everyone know about my powers?"

Maria shook her head, "not the lower level agents. Our higher levels, yeah, and the infirmary knows, I had to tell them to avoid any confusion when they took scans and DNA tests. But most of them are cool, and they assigned Amanda to you. She's one of the best. She patches me and some of the others up all the time."

"Thank you for coming for me Maria," Auralie said, her blue eyes filled with emotion as she looked up at the woman.

"Of course," Maria responded, "I said I was going to make you a Shield agent right? Well, I talked to my boss, Director Fury, and he's given me permission to train you. A couple other agents, Clint Barton and Natasha Romano will be helping too, but I'm in charge of training and looking out for you."

"Alright," Auralie smiled, but it was a fleeting smile, gone as soon as it came.

Maria cocked her head, "What's wrong Ali? Having second thoughts?"

Auralie shook her head, "no, I still want to join Shield. It's just been quite the adventure."

"You wanna talk about it," Maria asked. Auralie was about to reply that she didn't, but then she hesitated. Maria had come back to get her, and had made sure she was alright. Maria cared about her. Maria was the only one she had left.

So Auralie nodded and said, "Ok."

The two found an empty training room and sat down on a stack of practice mats to talk without anyone overhearing. Auralie poured the shattered dust of her heart out before Maria, telling the agent everything. She told the full story, of her parents death, all those years ago, of finding Lucian again and her joy at him being alive. Of Elory and her twin's betrayal. And how she had been abandoned by the one person she thought she could get back.

Maria listened to it all, and at the end just said, "that's some messed up stuff. Look, Ali, I have no powers, I can't relate to all the other dimensions and evil siblings, I'm an only child. But I know what happened to you wasn't right. I can't change the past, but I can try and give you a home."

"Thanks for taking a chance on me," Auralie muttered. Maria put an arm around the blonde, caring and compassionate.

Maria smiled, "This will be good for me too. I'm an only child, but I always wanted a sister. I promise I'll do better at siblinging than your brother."

Auralie smiled, "is siblinging a word?"

"Nope!" Maria laughed, "but it is now!"

Auralie nodded, "alright. I'd love to be your sister. But can I still be Auralie Shadow. Hill is a nice name, but I feel like Auralie Luna Shadow has the best ring to it."

Maria shrugged, "sure thing kid. Come on, you must be hungry, let's go get you some food."

Auralie was still broken, but Maria had come to save her. She felt as though she could trust and maybe come to love the agent like family, even if there was no one else left to care for her. Even through the pain, both physical and emotional, a hint of a smile appeared on her face as Auralie walked through the base, safely at her new sister's side.

**A/N: I adore Auralie and Maria's sister relationship. That sort of familial bond will be very important to the story, plus Maria is amazing, yet so underrated, so let's give her some love.**

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