



xv. Nightmares

Auralie was staying up late one night, around a month after Ultron, so she could read. It was three in the morning when she finally realized it might be a good idea to put the book down and go to sleep. However, before she could, she heard a scream.

Auralie was on her feet in an instant, racing down the hall, her bare feet pounding. At first, she had been afraid that someone was getting assassinated, but then she realized Friday would never let anyone in. She also realized who was screaming.

Auralie's hall in the new compound contained four bedrooms. Auralie's and Maria's, Sam's and Wanda's. Sam and Steve were on an overnight mission, trying to look for signs of Bucky. Auralie normally would have gone with them, but Nat needed her to help with running some drills with the new members. Maria was also away, doing who knows what for Fury and whatever remnants of Shield were left.

That meant it was Wanda.

The door to Wanda's room was unlocked and Auralie pushed it open. The brunette was sitting cross-legged on her bed, the covers pulled around her, tears dripping down her face as she whimpered. There was a red haze throughout the room and several objects were knocked over. Auralie realized that a blast of Wanda's magic had overtaken the room seconds before she got there.

"Wanda," she whispered, her voice soft but not fearful. Unlike most of the world, Auralie did not fear Wanda.

"He was there," Wanda sobbed, "he was there and he reached for me, and I reached for him, and when he grabbed my hand my magic..... it..... it strangled him. And he screamed and he screamed but it killed him. I killed him. My brother."

"Oh Wanda," Auralie said, coming to sit down beside the witch. Her arms reached out to encircle Wanda, and the witch collapsed into her, her tears falling onto the bed.

"You didn't hurt him. You didn't hurt him ever. You made his life worth living Wanda, and you never harmed him. Ultron took him from you. Don't take the blame for his actions," Auralie murmured.

"I worked with Ultron. He's dead because of me," Wanda cried.

"No," Auralie said, "Wanda, it's not your fault. Please listen to me. It's not your fault. Not one bit."

"I dream about him all the time," Wanda croaked, "and he always dies. Always."

"Why didn't you tell me? You know you can come to me for help," Auralie asked.

Wanda looked up, eyes brimming with tears, "my nightmares are the only place I get to see him."

"Oh Wanda," Auralie held the other girl tight, "believe me, I know how hard it is. But not fighting the nightmares, it's not healthy for you. I've been fighting my demons for a long time, and it's hard but you have people to help you. You have me to help you."

"I know, it's just so hard," Wanda smiled. Auralie stroked her hair as the witch laid her head on the light manipulator's shoulder.

"Believe me, I know. And I know how easy it is to blame yourself. You've been in my head, you know what I'm talking about," Auralie said, "I'm still working through the pain. It takes a while, but..... maybe we can be ok. I help you and you help me. But we both have to try. Can you do that?"

"Yes," Wanda raised her head and wiped her tears, "for Pietro. It's what he'd want me to do. Be strong."

"Ok," Auralie nodded, "and I'll try to be strong and fight my nightmares too. We can do this together."

"Together," Wanda repeated, pain in her eyes.

Auralie looked at the witch with concern, "what's wrong?"

Wanda laughed bitterly, the tears still dripping down her face, "My brother and I were going to be a team. Together. For all eternity. Nothing could separate us. Only now he's gone and I'm scared Auralie. I'm scared that to become attached to people is just setting yourself up for a world of pain. Because everyone leaves in the end. Or can you tell me that you won't leave?"

Auralie took a deep breath, "I can tell you that they'll have to kill me before I'll abandon you. I can't say I won't leave, but I can promise that my friendship will last for as long as it can."

"Why do you want to be my friend after everything I've done?" Wanda asked, her voice very small for such a powerful woman.

"Because," Auralie said plainly, "because you remind me of myself. Because you're quiet and kind and smart and determined. Because I like your personality and I like spending time with you and talking to you, and you get me. Because I don't really know how to explain it, I just like being friends with you. I guess we work well together that way."

Wanda nodded. Her tears had dried but she was still looking down, her face painted with emotions that Auralie couldn't decipher. Wanda held up a hand, twisting a thread of magic around it in a hypnotizing motion.

"Auralie," Wanda whispered, her voice the faintest sound, "will you stay with me. Just for tonight. I think it would help."

"Of course," Auralie replied.

Wanda stretched out, laying her head on the pillow. She looked tired, and the nightmares had been taking a toll on her. Auralie could see the dark circles under the witch's eyes.

"Tomorrow," Auralie said, "I'll teach you some tricks I've learned to help cope."

"Thank you," Wanda replied sleepily. She paused, looking up at the blonde girl, "hey Auralie, I'm so sorry. For what happened to you. If I could go back I'd fix it for you. I'd have my brother and you'd have yours."

"Thanks," Auralie said, her voice suddenly tense with emotion.

Wanda murmured, "but we can't go back." And then she was asleep. It wasn't the most peaceful or delightful sleep, but it was calm enough and she didn't have any dead brothers following her around.

Auralie lay awake for a bit longer. Her eyes stared at the ceiling. She wanted to help Wanda manage her grief, but she felt as though she was the worst person for the job. She didn't have a clue what to do about her own issues half the time.

But maybe that was why she wanted to help Wanda. Because she didn't see Wanda as a charity case, she saw Wanda as someone very much like herself. To Auralie, Wanda wasn't a nightmare, but a person. A person that she had become fast friends with and would now work to protect with her life.

Auralie's last thought before she fell asleep beside the witch was how odd this bond she had developed with the girl beside her was. It was not unpleasant, but something about it scared her.

Which was ridiculous of course, friendship had never been scary, only extraordinary and deep love did that.

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"Should we wake them up?" Clint asked. He had stopped by for a visit, but he had found only Nat was up. Upon investigating, they had discovered Auralie and Wanda asleep together.

Natasha sighed, "and deprive the two of them of their precious sleep. No. Hell, I would still be sleeping if you hadn't rung the doorbell."

"I'm sure," Clint laughed, "your right, let's give them their peace."

The two left the room and Natasha sighed, "I really hope everything's ok. Those two are good for each other, but they have a lot to overcome."

"Don't worry, they'll be ok. We'll help them," Clint reassured her, "so, I have to ask, are they a couple or....."

"No," Natasha rolled her eyes, "but glad to see you're already jumping to conclusions. Damn, this is gonna be a long day, I can already tell."

A/N: I feel like the movies did a horrible job of showing everything that Wanda probably had to deal with regarding her brother's death. I mean, they never mentioned him again. I'm fixing that here.

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