



xxiii. The Panther

A/N: T'Challa is here everyone! Black Panther is awesome (both the movie and the character)

Auralie and Sam were going to rescue Steve and Bucky. The two supersoldiers had dealt with the CIA easily, but then a man in a catsuit that seemed to be made of vibranium had started chasing them. The cat man also had supersoldier like speed, and so it was getting tough for Bucky to run from him.

Sam was flying a er them all, as the three individuals raced down the interstate. Steve had stolen a car because the panther had the addition of the suit to increase his speed and Steve did not have a suit like that. Auralie, who could not fly, had made use of the awesome drone that was Redwing. It was basically like she was riding an electronic, high tech boogie board through the sky. Needless to say, it was insanely weird.

They spotted Bucky stealing some guy's motorcycle and swinging himself up and onto it in what was one of the most badass moves Auralie had ever seen the former assassin use. And Bucky had some very badass moves.

However, the panther was clearly not giving up. He was clearly well trained and knew what he was doing. Auralie had never heard of any sort of panther-like superhero, and she wondered where he came from and what his story was. She was also curious about why he was trying to kill Bucky. She had a feeling that it had something to do with the bombing at the UN.

Sam began firing, but the blasts bounced harmlessly o the catsuit. Auralie's theories were correct, it was vibranium. The panther ignored them and raced a er the supersoldier. Steve chased a er the panther and Bucky, desperate to protect his best friend.

"Alright, I'm going in," Auralie cried.

"Wait wait wait....." Sam cried back as Auralie slid o of the drone so she was dangling with one hand. She waited until Bucky passed by on the motorcycle, then dropped, landing behind him.

"Auralie," he said with surprise.

"Hi," she grinned a bit, the wind in her hair, "maybe I didn't think this through."

"No, you didn't," Sam yelled through the communication device.

"Shut up Wilson," Auralie hissed, "Bucky, you drive, I'll defend."

"Alright," he said, focusing on skidding and racing them through the highways. Auralie slowed down the panther by breaking things down and trying to block his path with blasts of light. Of course, these did no actual harm, but they did seem to keep him from catching up and killing Bucky.

Auralie let out a deep sigh, "Bucky do you know this guy?"

"Never seen him before, I don't think," Bucky replied.

"Me either. I'm curious as to why he wants to kill you," Auralie said.

Then everything went wrong for Auralie and her friends. She wasn't quite sure what happened, but the panther and Steve caught up to them, Sam caught up as well, and soon they were all grouped around, the motorcycle crashed, and a fight was about to break out. That was the moment when the CIA agents finally arrived, surrounding them and aiming weapons at them.

Rhodey landed beside the agents in full War Machine armor, pointing his guns at them, "stand down. All of you."

Bucky, Steve, Sam, and Auralie slowly raised their arms into the air. The CIA began relieving them of their weapons and possessions. Auralie glared as one reached for the bag of plums she had shoved in the pocket of her jacket.

"It's fruit, not a bomb," she said angrily.

"Hand it over," he held out his hand. Grumbling, she passed him the plums and sent a silent apology to Bucky.

She turned to see the panther taking o his mask. She gasped when she saw who it was. The prince of Wakanda, the new king, T'Challa. He had lost his father in the bombing at the UN. No wonder he was mad. The king clearly thought Bucky had caused the bombing.

"You're majesty," Steve said respectfully.

Auralie nodded to him, "King T'Challa."

They were all lead to the car. As they got in, Sam, who hadn't said a word since their capture, looked to T'Challa and asked, "so, you like cats?"

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They took Bucky away to put him in a cell and interrogate him. Auralie watched Steve, who had adamantly told everyone that Bucky didn't do it. No one seemed to be listening. Tony and Nat came to keep an eye on the other Avengers.

"Look what you've done," Natasha admonished. She looked tired and frustrated, but not particularly mad. She had been anticipating this.

Sharon Carter came in and passed Steve, Sam, and Auralie small slips of paper. She said, "receipts for your gear."

"Really," Sam glared, "bird costume?"

"I didn't write it," she said, leaving.

Natasha sighed, "Ross wanted to prosecute you, we had to give him something."

"I'm not getting my shield back any time soon," Steve said.

"Technically it's the government's property," Natasha called.

"That's cold," Sam rolled his eyes.

"Warmer than jail," Tony shrugged, leading them onward. Auralie hadn't spoken all this time because she was trying not to laugh. Some poor agent had written Bag of Plums - why does a superhero have fruit with her?n her receipt.

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Auralie and Steve were sitting with Tony as he droned on about some vintage pens that had signed Captain America's origin story into existence. They had also confirmed Pepper and Tony were not expecting, they were taking a break, something that Auralie found very weird. She just concluded that Pepper needed a long vacation and that she and Tony would be back together soon. Pepper and Tony were one of those things that were just meant to be.

"Your point?" Auralie asked her friend. She was actually glad to see Tony, glad that he wasn't too angry because he was one of her close friends. He had helped her with her nightmares and anxiety, he had joked around with her, they had fought together, and she didn't want to lose a friend over something as stupid as a political action.

"We could fix all of this. If you would just sign the accords, we could get back on track," Tony begged them.

Steve looked up, "I'm not saying it's impossible. But there would have to be safeguards."

"Of course," Tony said, "once we have the basic agreement we could make adjustments."

Auralie looked at them in surprise. While she wanted her team back together, she also didn't want the accords. She was surprised that Steve would ever consider giving up their freedom. She knew that even if Steve did sign, she wouldn't. She couldn't do that. It would be going against what she stood for, and that was an organization that saved the world regardless of politics. She didn't want to be politicized, she wanted to do good for the sake of doing good.

But she also didn't want to give up all her friends.

"Think about it, it's better for everyone. We continue operating, Barnes gets transferred to an American psych ward instead of a Wakandan prison," Tony continued, "we just need to get Wanda reinstated....."

"Wanda," Auralie sat up straighter. What was this about Wanda? Was her friend alright?

"What about Wanda?" Steve asked.

Tony waved it o , "she's fine, she's confined to the compound, Vision's keeping her company."

"WHAT," Auralie screamed.

"Really Tony," Steve sighed, annoyance filling his face. Auralie could tell Steve was mad, but instead of trying to calm the fire, she was fueling one of her own. Wanda was under house arrest. Like she was a criminal, instead of a human being who made a mistake. Auralie was most definitely not alright with that.

"She's a foreign influence," Tony attempted to explain his reasoning, "they don't grant visas to weapons of mass destruction."

"She's a kid," Steve yelled.

Auralie roared at the same time, "MY WANDA IS NOT A MONSTER!"

They both looked at her. Her face was flushed with rage as she said, "Wanda is not a monster. Just because she has powers does not mean she is a weapon of mass destruction. She is not a gun for you to pick up and kill people with, she is a wonderful person, she is still hurting, she has lost everything, and yet she's still strong and heroic!"

"She worked with Ultron," Tony argued.

Auralie threw her hands up in fury, "you never took the time to really know her. I did, and she's great. She is not a villain, she makes mistakes! She makes mistakes too Tony, she deserves the same forgiveness you got."

"Look, I get why you're mad, but if we signed the accords....." Tony tried again.

Auralie shook her head, "I was never going to sign. Especially not now that I know the accords considers people to be less than human for something they can't help. You know how much I believe in the freedom to be who you are without knowing I relied for it. You know why I believe that. You know I can't sign."

And with that, she got up and stalked out, leaving Steve and Tony to continue their argument. She sat down beside Nat, even though she might not be allowed there, because she was mad and Natasha had always been her friend, even if they didn't agree on everything.

Natasha placed a hand on her shoulder, "Ali?"

"They think the girl I've come to care about so much is a monster," the light manipulator spat.

Natasha sighed, "oh Ali, they'll always think we're freaks and monsters. Even if we know we aren't. I'm sorry."

"I knew they thought that, but it never hit me this hard," Auralie muttered, "not until they did it to Wanda."

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