



vi. Prepping For War

A/N: That line in the gif was so great, especially in the trailer when we didn't even know most of the context, and we all just got excited to see Steve and T'Challa.

Auralie and her fellow Avengers were all gathered in the lab. Steve and T'Challa were looking out the window of the tower. Auralie and Wanda were watching Shuri scan the mind stone and start attempting to remove it. It was a slow process, but they would take any chance they could get.

They had all taken the time to change into their gear if they weren't in it already. That meant Wanda had on her red jacket and looked like a total badass. It also meant that Auralie had her shirt and leggings and the jacket she had stolen from Natasha and would probably never give back.

Natasha herself stood talking to Bucky, Sam, and Rhodey. Bruce studied Shuri's technique like an eager to learn student. He seemed fascinated by all the Wakandan technology and incredibly impressed with the genius in charge of it. Auralie wished Tony was here. He would have loved to meet Shuri and have a conversation about technology with her.

They seemed to be ahead of the clock, for once in their lives. Auralie was just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

"So," Bucky said, looking at Auralie with a teasing grin, "Ali and Wanda finally got together." Auralie shot him a glare and he chuckled.

"Auralie and I have been very happy together for the past two years, yes," Wanda responded, deciding to take it as an actual comment and not teasing.

Sam, someone who took joy in messing with Auralie, chimed in, "Yeah, it took them long enough to get together. You're lucky you weren't at the compound then. Whenever they were in the room together, you could cut the tension in the room with a knife."

"So it was like cheese," Bucky mused thoughtfully. Auralie, wondering once again how she had ended up friends with these assholes, rolled her eyes.

"I see you've forgiven Sam for the seat incident," Auralie fired back. Sam rolled his eyes this time. Bucky frowned.

"What's the seat incident," Rhodey asked. Natasha snorted. She had heard this story before, Rhodey hadn't. Auralie, who had witnessed the seat incident first hand, was laughing out loud.

Bucky sighed, "Sam kept crushing me with his seat because he beat me to the shotgun position. Though it's not all him, Steve was the one who chose that awful, awful tiny car."

"Yeah, he is no longer allowed to pick the vehicles," Auralie confided, and they all laughed. Steve, used to this sort of thing, studiously ignored them.

It felt good, standing around talking with the others. It felt familiar. Rhodes laughing next to Bruce, Natasha making sarcastic comments, Steve being their long-suffering leader and ignoring them all, Wanda and Auralie being inseparable as always, Sam and Bucky making fun of their best buddy, and some sort of weird science and robotics going on in the background.

But Auralie could also see the holes where their team was not complete. If it had been perfect, Tony would have been joining in on the jokes and science and probably talking some with his spider protegee. If it had been perfect, Thor would have been there referencing some obscure Asgardian creature like bilgesnipe. If it had been perfect, Scott would be there joking and talking about his adventures, and Clint would be rolling his eyes, having seen it all. Probably drinking a coffee too.

If it had been perfect, maybe none of them would even be here. Maybe they wouldn't be joking around, trying to put off a war they all had their secret fears about. Maybe there would be no need for the Avengers because threats like this did not happen.

Maybe it would have been better that way. Maybe her friends would be happier. Auralie knew that she would be happy because she had some good friends, and a sister, and Wanda. Auralie wondered, though, if Wanda wished things were different.

Because to be honest, in Auralie's perfect fantasy, Pietro would have been standing alongside his sister, arguing with everyone and saying that stupid catchphrase of his. And if Auralie wished Pietro was there, she could only imagine how much Wanda wished it.

Some scars never fully healed. Whether they were physical, like Rhodey's legs or Bucky's missing arm, or symbolic, like the anger Auralie and Wanda's scars from the rape represented. Some deaths would never be gotten over either. Auralie could only hope that they didn't have any more of those. But in this crazy universe, one had to be on their guard at all time.

That was when a loud crashing sound came over everything, shaking Auralie from the deep recesses of her mind. She looked up, seeing an alien ship had crashed in the jungle, unable to breach Wakanda's shields.

With the solemn attitude of a king making a dark decree, T'Challa stated, "they are here."

Okoye had come in from her position outside the door, awaiting orders from her king.

Natasha turned to the others, "Rhodes, the War Machine suit is in the jet, as is Bruce's armor." Bruce had decided that just because he couldn't become the Hulk, didn't mean he wasn't going to fight.

"Shuri, how close are we?" T'Challa asked his sister.

"Not nearly as close as I'd like. I need more time," Shuri replied, reaching for one of her devices.

T'Challa nodded, "we shall try and buy it for you."

Natasha turned to Auralie and Wanda, "Wanda, I need you to stay here and protect Shuri and Vision. Ali, your choice, come with us and fight or stay here."

Auralie usually would want to stay with her girlfriend, but she felt like she could make a difference on that battlefield. She told Nat, "I'm going to fight."

Meanwhile, Okoye was asking T'Challa what to do. The King replied, "evacuate the city, engage all defenses, and get this man a shield."

There was only one man he could be talking about.

Everyone raced to follow his orders. Steve made his way over to Wanda, "the instant that stone is out of Vision's head, you blow it to hell."

"I will," Wanda replied with a look of bravery upon her face. Auralie dashed over to her and kissed her on the forehead, before running off with the others. This was now war, and it was time to fight.

A/N: I added my own dialogue to this chapter to make it last longer and showcase some of Auralie's thoughts. Next chapters will be the fight scenes.

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