

## 2.2

"...unprecedented reports of extreme water temperatures was recorded this weekend on the outskirts of the African country of Wakanda, with locals claiming that fish in the streams they were fishing in had been boiled alive from the inside out. More on this story a er the weather..."

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Pepper shut o the TV as she turned to face Tony, her hands on her hips as she looked at the man who was staring back at her with a blank look on his face. She sighed, reaching over and throwing him the shoes that he had le sitting at the edge of the room only minutes before.

"Tony, you promised me that you'd come today!" She exclaimed, a hint of a smile on her lips as his blank expression dropped as he gave in to her demands. He sighed playfully, standing up and placing a so kiss to her lips, his hand dropping to lightly grasp the hand that laid by her side.

"And you promised me you'd marry me," he mumbled, a grin on his lips as he pulled back from her. "But I didn't realise it was going to take this long."

Pepper swatted him away, rolling her eyes as the billionaire tugged on the shoes that she had flung towards him. She knew the man was only playing but he was right - they had been taking a long time to plan the wedding, but they both knew the underlying truth as to why. It just didn't feel right getting married with Scottie as their flower girl. Sure, it had only ever been a joke that she was going to take up the role but now that she had been gone from their lives for almost two years, it was beginning to hurt just a little less.

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"Right, let's go," Tony finally announced, picking up his phone for a brief second before looking over at Pepper with a cheeky grin.

Throwing the phone over his shoulder and listening to it land on the couch behind him, he opened his mouth contently. "In fact, you have my full and undivided attention Miss Soon-To-Be-Stark Potts."

Rolling her eyes, Pepper couldn't help but chuckle as she followed the man out of the room. Had they le three minutes later, they might have caught Tony's phone frantically ringing. Happy's caller ID was continuously popping up on the screen, a million messages requesting the billionaire's attention flashing across the screen.

### TWO HOURS BEFORE

"General, be careful," T'Challa's voice called out as he watched the woman walk closer to the figure on the ground. He rubbed at his neck slightly, used to heat but not of this intensity.

As he walked forward his guard dispersed around the figure that was lying on the ground, their face hidden by the dirty blonde locks that had thick red stains present that he could only assume was blood. Whether that was the girl's blood or someone else's, he was yet to discover.

The hairs on the back of his neck rose as he focused his eyesight on the girl, ignoring the slight increase in temperature with every step he was taking. He could feel his guard get more on edge with each step but there was something so familiar about the figure laying on the Wakandan ground before him. As Shuri went to reach out and touch the figure, he instantly recognised where he knew them from.

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"Don't touch her, sister!" He exclaimed, lightly pulling the girl's shoulder and stopping her hands from touching the skin of the girl that would have burned her. He cast a saddened and shocked look downwards as he turned to his General's, making sure that they listened to every word he said.

"I want her moved to our medical centre, but make sure that no contact is made with her skin. She is hot - and for a reason too."

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Shuri watched confused as she noticed the frown resting on her brothers face. He hadn't looked this conflicted over something in a long time - almost three years since Killmonger had tried to take over their country - and it was confusing her, but also scaring her slightly.

"Who is that, brother?"

T'Challa ran a hand over his face before looking back at his sister, a solemn look on his face as he tried to think of his options. He knew that he was harbouring a fugitive to the law in his country, one that Tony Stark was especially keen to find, but he knew that he couldn't hide the existence of the girl that was being carefully carried away from the man.

"That, that was Scottie Casey."

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When Scottie opened her eyes, she was surprised to see a roof above her. Taking a deep breath as she tried to figure out where she was, she remembered what Clint and Natasha had once told her about waking up in a completely di erent environment to what you had last been in.

Closing her eyes and keeping her body still, she feigned sleep as her hearing tried to find any clues about her current location. The faint static and humming noise told her that she was either on a boat or in a plane, but the turbulence her body experienced for a brief second confirmed her thought that she was thousands of miles up in the sky.

Compromised escape route. Unlikely exit plan without injuries or fatalities. A smart way for her captures to avoid any conflict that might arise.

Sitting up slightly, she allowed her eyes to open to study her immediate surroundings. Looking down, she noticed her le arm had been wrapped tightly in a bandage and hung in a lose sling against her chest. Furrowing her eyebrows at what seemed like a nice gesture, she didn't have long to wait before an answer literally walked into her life.

The door between the cabin of the airplane and the captain's seat opened, an automated voice above her announcing that auto-pilot had commenced. She recognised that accent, but surely more than one person in the world had an Irish AI unit?

Looking up, her hand clenched at her side defensively as she prepared herself to see who was about to enter, she considered if she would survive a fall from an airplane. It seemed unlikely, but then again, this was the third or fourth time she had seemingly escaped death.

"You've got a lot of explaining to do, kid."

Her eyebrows pinched together slightly as she looked at the man she had come to know as an uncle, his smile so but also curious as he looked at the girl he had mourned for two years. Happy Hogan was looking at Scottie in confusion, and she was giving him the exact same look back.

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"We thought you were dead Scottie, for the past two years the whole world thought you were dead," he continued, a frown falling on to his face as he looked at the girl. "Where've you been?"

Scottie shrugged, going to move her arm but remembering it was wrapped in a sling. She opened her mouth to tell him all about where she had been, but shut it as she remembered she really had no idea where she had truly been for two years. It had only felt like a few days since they had all fought each other on the concourse, but she now knew it was a lot longer.

"... two years?" She so ly questioned, her voice rough from finally speaking. Happy furrowed his eyebrows as he watched her face contort in horror and confusion, a sudden look of understanding crossing his features. "What happened to the team? Is Rhodey okay? The accords?"

She started to rattle o questions as her mind began to catch up, tears pricking in her eyes as she tried to think about everything that had happened. Happy rushed to her side, lightly and carefully placing a hand on her arm (since T'Challa had informed the man when he came to collect the girl about how she had been burning up when they found her).

"Hey, hey... look... Rhodey is fine, well mostly, and as for the team... the Avengers don't exist anymore," Happy explained, lightly rubbing her arm as she looked at him in shock. "It's tough to believe, I know. But there's a lot more to it than that."

Scottie paused for a moment as she thought about the one thing that was really stuck on her mind. She knew that if the team hadn't gotten back together that it was a risky thing to wonder but she was sure Happy would understand.

"Wanda..."

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"Wanda is a fugitive, just like Steve and Natasha and Sam," he finished for her, his voice a little rougher but still with that so tone she had always known from the man. She could hear that there was tensions in his voice but he still cared for them the same way he would always care for her if she ever did something stupid.

Scottie nodded, rubbing her head as she leaned back and got for a moment. Before she could tell Happy that she needed to get to Tony, to warn him about the aliens that had attacked her, he was already standing up and heading back to the cockpit of the plane.

"I think its time we got you to your dad." \_\_\_\_\_

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"You should have shirts in your closet," Scottie's eats instantly picked up on Pepper's voice as her and Happy rushes towards the couple, the security guard not at all happy about Tony not having taken his phone with them on their walk.

Tony stood tall as he spoke to Pepper, his signature smile on his face as he grinned at the woman he was soon to marry. Scottie felt herself almost pick up her pace as she saw him, completely ignoring any thought of what would happen if members of the public realised it was her. She didn't care anymore.

"Yeah. You know what there should be? No more surprises. We're gonna have a nice dinner tonight. Show o this Harry Win-stone. Right? And we should have no more surprises. Ever. I should promise you," Tony told Pepper, a smile on his face as he leaned towards Pepper.

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Pepper smoked widely at him, leaning in for a kiss as she closed her eyes. Pulling back a er the peck, she opened them as she looked over Tony's shoulder.

The billionaire's smile dropped as he noticed that Pepper's calm look had instantly morphed into one of pure shock. He wasn't sure if it was a good thing or a bad thing, but he did know that his nanites were already forming in his palm should he need it.

Spinning around to see where she was looking, the man froze with an identical look on his face as he noticed the sight in front of them.

Happy was standing, panting and out of breath with a so smile on his face as he grinned at Tony and Pepper, seeing the love in their eyes towards the girl standing just in front of him. He felt his heart full again as he looked at the Stark family, well aware that this is how they should have been.

"Hi dad," Scottie breathed, rushing forward and flinging herself into him. Tony's arms automatically wrapped around her, one of them going to the back of her neck and holding her head tightly into his body as his eyes stared up to the sky in shock. Tears formed as he pulled her back to look at her, noticing the faint cuts on her body and how her hair had grown since he last saw her two years ago.

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"I missed you," Scottie breathed out, her arms still right around his waist as they hugged again.

"I missed you too kid."

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