Practical Magic

by RyuCrisis

Summary

When Tony Stark impulsively adopts a young girl from an orphanage, he had no idea how not ordinary she would be and not in the mutant sense either. Seeing no other options, he seeks out the help of Doctor Stephen Strange, Sorcerer Supreme. When Stephen finally agreed to help, he had no idea how much it would change EVERYTHING (This will feature SOME Avengers content). Part 1 complete Part 2 coming soon!

Notes

Hey! This is a story I posted elsewhere and I thought I would give it a go here too!

Extremely Important Note: So, over the course of writing this story, I have come across one story that has A LOT of parts that are extremely similar to mine and I wish to address this. I
I want to make sure that everybody who is reading this story and or is currently just checking it out knows that I swear up and down that I DID NOT steal any ideas from anybody and all my ideas are in fact my own. I just wanted to make sure to clear this up because I am a little concerned that people will read both of the stories and either think WTF or just not want anything to do with either of them. That is the last thing I want. I wanted everybody to enjoy this story not think I'm stealing peoples stuff or something of the sort.
12 Years Earlier

10 year old Irena walked down the hallways of her orphanage. She hated this place but it was all she had and it was better than living on the streets. She tried that already and it royally sucked. Clutching her small stuffed black cat that she called 'dark' closer to her, she quietly walked toward the game room. If the stupid boys who bullied her were not there, she might finally able to get the Nintendo to herself for a little bit. The orphanage didn't have much, so getting play time on the Nintendo was pretty coveted.

Peering through the crack in the game room door, she saw that the bullies were already there and sighed sadly. Of course they were, why should she get a chance to play the Nintendo anyway. Letting out another sad sigh, she turned away from the door and started to walk back down the hallway. Halfway there, she felt a hand grab onto her shoulder hard and she was forcibly whirled around. Coming face to face with her bullies, her mismatched eyes of blue and green widened in horror.

Charlie, Toby and Alex were to put it quite simply complete jerks. Deep, deep down, she knew that it wasn't all totally their fault. Their situation was just as crappy as hers was and they were taking out their anger and frustrations with it on her. Somehow, they thought making her life miserable would make them feel better. She wondered how that was actually working out for them. Most of the time, she either dealt with it the best she could or just ignored them, she refused to let them get to her.

However today, she could tell she wouldn't be able to get away that easily. She knew that they were trying to do. They were trying to provoke her into losing control of her powers. If she did again, Mrs. Williams, the kind old lady who tried to run the orphanage the best could, would have to send her away to be institutionalized. Somehow, they thought this would give them a better shot at being adopted. So not only did she have to put up with them making her life terrible just because, she had to live with that too.

She couldn't help but think that those boys weren't too bright. Nobody in their right mind would want to adopt her in the first place with powers like hers. Everybody thought that she was just a mutant but she didn't think so. Her powers didn't seem to function 'that way'. There weren't just one or two things she could do. Her powers did many things, none of which she could control very well. They seem to manifest the most when she was feeling any emotion intensely. It seemed to be especially bad when she felt extreme anger and sadness.

Suddenly, the tallest of the boys, Toby, ripped Dark from her arms snapping her from her thoughts. "Hey! Give her back!" She yelled angrily.

The boy merely laughed and held Dark higher.
"Make me!" He laughed.

She watched in horror as Toby made to twist Dark's head off of her shoulders. She tried everything to get the stuffed animal back from him to no avail. His cronies Alex and Charlie did nothing but stare at her in amusement. Jerks.

"No, please don't!" She screamed.

She could feel the feeble control she had on her powers had begun to slip. Watched the look on the boy's faces change from amusement to fear as she was sure her mismatched eyes eclipsed to black. Blue energy surrounded both her hands, she lifted on up and she pointed her palm at Toby who had frozen in fear.

"I said give her back!" She snarled.

Before she could let loose the energy however, she heard the heavy footsteps of several adults coming towards her and the boys.

"Irena, please stop!" She heard Mrs. Williams shout.

She forced the energy around hands to dissipate. Gathering every ounce of courage she had, she turned around slowly. She was petrified that Mrs. Williams would send her away for this. She was shocked that Mrs. Williams was not alone. A younger looking woman and man were with her. The woman had very kind looking blue eyes and long blond hair. The man however, looked very proud and arrogant but she could see some emotions in his dark brown eyes. The man looked vaguely familiar for some reason. She thought long and hard for a moment and then the lightbulb came on. She remembered hearing Mrs. Williams saying something about Tony Stark and a donation. She blanched. The millionaire Tony Stark was going to make a donation to this orphanage and he was standing in front of her looking very angry. She was sure she had just wrecked everything.

Suddenly, he started moving forward and she could do nothing but remain frozen in place completely petrified. The boys also remained completely frozen in place not knowing what to do or say. She watched in shock and fascination as Tony Stark stomped up to Toby and snatched Dark from Toby's hands and handed the stuffed toy back to her. She looked up at him completely speechless.

"Hey you little jerks! Didn't anybody teach you it is not okay to rip the head of a little girl's toy!?” He reprimanded.

"Now scram!" He added, glaring darkly at them.

Shockingly, the boys listened to him and took off quickly.

Finally unfreezing, she clutched Dark tightly to herself and ran to Mrs. Williams.

Clutching at Mrs. Williams' dress, she buried her face into it and started sobbing. She couldn't help it. She was petrified she would be sent away now.

"P-please don't send me away Mrs. Williams! I promise it won't happen again!" She sobbed.

She felt Mrs. Williams try to calm her down.

"Hush child, I promise I won't send you away. Calm yourself." She murmured softly.

Calming down some, she watched with some distrust as Tony Stark shared a look with the lady with
the kind blue eyes that she didn't quite understand and then approached her and Mrs. Williams. While her mind knew that Tony had just saved Dark, the rest of her was still kind of scared of him. He crouched down in front of her and she could sense that he was trying to be as non-threatening as possible.

"Hey Kiddo, how would you like to come and stay with Pepper and me? That way you could be my official assistant and there would be no annoying boys to bug you." He asked and then added jokingly. "Except me of course"

She looked at him like he grew 6 eye balls and sprouted tiny little green hairs. Was he being serious? Would he really take her with him?

She watched Tony's face fall a little as he realized that she didn't believe him.

"I'm being serious, Kid. Why don't you take Pepper here to help you gather your stuff and I will get this ball rolling." He said.

Cautiously, she let go of Mrs. William's dress and approached the lady she now knew to be Pepper. Pepper looked at her kindly and held out her hand. Taking Pepper's hand, she led she did as Tony asked and led her to where she kept her stuff. She never really considered it a room just a place where she kept her stuff. Rooms were supposed to feel safe this place never felt like that. She and Pepper gathered what little stuff she had. True to his word, Tony did 'get the ball rolling' as he promised and for the first time, it was the beginning of something 'good' in her life.

Present Day

Humming along to the music blaring from her speakers, Irena smiled to herself as she thought of that memory. It was by far her favorite. It was the first day in her life that she actually felt what it was like to be cared about. Even though it wasn't always easy, neither Tony nor Pepper ever gave up on her not even when she lost control of her powers. They never ever once threatened to get rid of her because of them. They taught each other new things every day. They became her family in every way but blood and she never cared about the blood part.

Currently, she was trying to fix part of Tony's hulk buster suit. Instead of becoming Tony's assistant like he once said, she ended up becoming his chief mechanic and she was damn good at it too. Whatever he broke, she fixed. The same went for every Avenger that called the tower home. There wasn't anything she couldn't fix or make. That she knew of yet anyway.

Picking up a hammer, she started to try and re-shape the distorted piece of metal on the work table in front of her. Because she worked such a physical and demanding job, she preferred comfort to functionality most of the time. Her favorite things to work in were a pair of Tony's stolen work overalls and an old ratty black tank top. The overalls were a little big so she had to adjust them all the time but she didn't care. To keep her long, dark, curly hair out of her face, she always wore some kind of different colored bandanna.

Realizing that she would need a little help to get the stubborn metal to do what she wanted, she grabbed her goggles from the shelf above her work bench, momentarily she looked fondly at the ratty black cat stuffed animal kept up there with her goggles and iPod. Grabbing her goggles, she put them on and readied her blowtorch. Carefully, she heated the metal evenly and began to re-shape it.

As she did this, her mind started to wonder. She thought about her powers and that how no matter what she tried, she still had about the same amount of control over them that she did when she was 10 years old. She was 22 for goodness sake. She should have better control by now but nothing she did worked. She did develop a theory about them though, that they weren't a mutation and they were
something else.

One day, when she was being particularly naughty, she decided to eavesdrop on Tony and Pepper and she heard them talking about someone called 'Stephen Strange'. She being the person that she was, she decided do a little research via Tony's files to figure out who this mysterious 'Stephen Strange' was. It turned out that he was a Sorcerer, like really? A real actual Sorcerer, but at this point she was ready to try anything to stop blowing crap up in her sleep. She determined that he lived in the Sanctum Sanctorum. While she didn't exactly know where or what that was, she decided to go and find it.

It took her several nights to actually find it and when she did, she felt something weird emanating from it. Not bad just weird, weird enough that she couldn't summon enough bravery to actually knock on the door. Night after night, it went the same. She would find the place, but would find herself unable to summon the actual gonads needed to knock on the damn door.

She felt so stupid, like she was that 10 year old scared little girl all over again.

It pissed her off royally because she swore to herself she would never be like that again and here she was being a total coward instead.

Suddenly, she was ripped from her thoughts when she sensed Tony approaching outside of her door. She could also sense somebody else that she didn't know with him. She barely had time to turn the music down and the blowtorch off before F.R.I.D.A.Y overrode the locks on her door and it slide open. She hated when Tony did that. Just because she was his 'adopted daughter' didn't mean she didn't deserve some privacy! The least he could do was knock dammit!

She opened her mouth to tell Tony just how much she 'loved' his invasion of her privacy when she got a good look at who was with him she shut it really quickly. Doctor Stephen Strange 'Sorcerer Supreme' was standing in her door way with Tony looking at her with she could only describe as a look of amusement on his handsome features. For the first time in her life, she really and truly wished that the floor would open up and swallow her whole. She could only begin to imagine what she looked like right now.

The only coherent thought running through her brain at the moment was how in THE HELL did Tony manage to find out that she had been trying to go and talk to him?
Chapter Notes

Hey! So I have a lot of chapters of this done so I will posting them all as soon as I can!
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Irena

Not knowing exactly what to do with the situation in front of her, Irena remained rooted to the spot clutching her blowtorch for dear life. Her brain was working a mile a minute. Tony must have been looking into asking him for help with her little problem. That was probably why she overheard him and Pepper talking about Doctor Strange in the first place and Tony was keeping so much information on him. She suppressed a frown, she didn't know whether be to grateful that Tony was trying to help or insulted that he thought she was so far gone that she needed that kind of help. Regardless, she had a sickening feeling that she was not going to like what was about to happen to her.

She watched with fascination as Tony approached her with his hands in front of him like she was a ticking time bomb about to go off. She saw that Doctor Strange elected to stay near the door way. Just what in the seven depths of hell what happening here?

"Hey kiddo, you might want to drop the blowtorch and sit down." He advised softly.

The sick feeling in her stomach increased tenfold at the tone of Tony's voice, he never ever used that tone of voice with her unless something bad happened or was going to happen.

She decided that her best course of action was to do as she was told. Placing her blowtorch on her work bench, she pulled up a stool and sat down. She waited for Tony to do the same. After Tony sat down, he looked at her like he was begging her not to freak out at what he was about to tell her. She bit her lip anxiously and tried not to fidget.

"Look kid, you've got to promise me that you will not freak out at what I am about to tell you. You gotta know I'm only trying to help you here." He said.

"I take it that you know that Doctor Strange here is a sorcerer." He added, giving her a knowing look.

She blushed a little at that. So he knew she had been snooping. Ooopsie doodle.

"Honestly, I wouldn't even believe magic was even possible but at this time there are no other options at the moment. You can't keep going on like this, you need to get some control over these powers of yours. Doctor Strange is offering to help you do that but you will need to stay with him at the Sanctum Sanctorum." Tony explained gently.

She tried to process what Tony just tried to explain to her. He wanted her to just drop everything she
knew and leave the ONLY place she ever felt comfortable in since she was 10 years old and go somewhere with someone she did not know because he thought her powers were actually some kind of magic? WHAT. THE. HELL? Sure, she wanted to find Doctor Strange and maybe ask him a few questions but this was just too much.

Was she really that bad that Tony wanted to get rid of her? She could feel angry tears pricking at the corners of her mismatched eyes. He promised her that no matter what happened, he would never send her away, so much for that.

No matter how she tried to keep it together, she felt her emotions begin to spiral out of control and she began to feel hazy. She saw that Tony was trying to say something to her but her mind was just too hazy to make out what it was. She knew by the look on Tony's face when her eyes eclipsed to black. Of all the times this happened, this time felt different. It felt as if she really had no control over her body.

Usually, her she only had no control over when or how her powers manifested but if she tried hard enough she could turn them off. This time however, she had zero control over her body and she was freaking the hell out. She hadn't even realized that she stood up from the stool she was sitting on. Her arm lifted from her side and she pointed the palm of her hand towards Tony. She watched the blue energy begin to form around her palm. Even though she was upset at Tony, she didn't want to hurt him. What the hell was happening to her and why the HELL couldn't she stop it?

As she was about to let loose the blue energy crackling around her palm, a deep voice suddenly cut through her hazy mind.

"Irena, stop." It said.

She forced herself to turn in the direction that the voice was coming from. It was Doctor Strange, somehow he moved from the doorway to right in front of her. She looked at him with inky black eyes wondering just how in the hell he got in front of her so fast but her hazy mind just couldn't figure it out.

"Irena, you must stop focusing on your emotions and must focus on my voice instead." He said calmly.

She tried to do as he said but it was really hard. As she started to let go of the myriad of messed up emotions going through her mind, she felt the haze begin to lift. Her arm fell back to her side and she managed to make the blue energy around her palm dissipate.

"That's it, let it go." He encouraged.

After a few more minutes, the haze lifted completely and her eyes returned to normal. First, she looked at Tony who just seemed relieved that she was okay, for that she was extremely thankful and then back to Doctor Strange who now looked extremely worried instead of amused.

"W-what just happened to me?" She croaked.

"That was magic out of control. Magic, especially strong magic like yours is often tied to the emotions. The stronger the emotion, the more out of control the magic gets." He explained.

She bit back a sad, angry sigh. She knew that he was right and she knew that she needed to get control of these powers before something really blew up in her face. Slowly, she turned back to face Tony.

"Alright Tony, you win. I'll go." She mumbled.
She watched Tony practically sag with relief and she couldn't help but get aggravated a little bit.

'Ooh gee thanks, Tony. Way to make me feel like crap all over again, you asshole.' She thought, annoyed.

She watched with fascination as the worried look that Doctor Strange had been looking at her with suddenly morphed back into one of amusement again.

'What the hell?' She thought in confusion.

Then it hit her, oh HELL no. He couldn't be reading her thoughts, could he? He was a sorcerer after all, that had to be in his arsenal of tools and weapons. How embarrassing. She needed to get the hell out of this situation for a few minutes and get her head screwed back on straight.

"Um, I'm just gonna go and change and get my stuff." She mumbled, gesturing behind her with her thumb over her shoulder.

She backpedaled as fast as she could through the sliding doors behind her. Once the doors closed in front her, she let out a huge relieved sigh. She could hear Tony and Doctor Strange talking through the door but she ignored it. Looking around her room, she began to gather all things she wanted to take with her. She just gathered the essentials like her toiletries and her laptop. She picked out some of her favorite clothes too. She supposed it was a by-product of living at the orphanage for so long but she never really had or wanted a lot of stuff. She was always happy with just the essentials.

After placing everything in a duffle bag she placed on her bed, she went to change out of her overalls and tank top. Looking through the clothes she had left in her closet, she pulled out an old Billy Talent concert shirt and a pair of beat up dark skinny jeans and put them on. She switched her work boots for her favorite pair of Doc Martins. She ditched her goggles but kept her bandanna because her hair was probably a giant crow's nest and she just didn't have the energy to deal with it right now.

Before she left the room, she made sure to grab her cell phone and charger. She also picked up her beat up leather jacket and put it on too. When she finally worked up the courage, she picked up her duffle bag and re-entered her work shop. She was shocked at what she saw. She felt awkwardness in the room so strong that it was almost palpable. Clearly, whatever the two men had talked about ended in an argument of some kind.

Both of them were standing at opposite ends of the room glaring at each other. She found the whole entire thing to be hilarious and had to suppress a giggle.

She used the moment and grabbed both her iPod and 'Dark' off of the shelf above her workbench. She shoved both things in her bag as fast as she could. She really didn't want either man seeing her with the stuffed animal because that would just make an already embarrassing situation ten times more embarrassing and she didn't really need that right now.

Suddenly, another errant thought popped into her head. Just what would Tony do with her room and work shop? Surely he wouldn't give it to somebody else would he? The thought of somebody else in what she considered to be HER space sent into another emotional tailspin. This time however, before anything bad could happen again she felt a large, warm hand on her back.

She was shocked to see Doctor Strange standing beside her. He regarded her with a look of calm and warmth. Feeling herself calm down some, she looked back up at him with a grateful look glad he was able stop her from freaking out all over again. The awkward clearing of a throat caused both her and the Doctor to look in the direction of Tony who looked at Doctor Strange with a 'Get away from my adopted daughter right now, asshole' sort of look. She inwardly rolled her eyes.
"I'm a big girl now Tony, remember? You wanted me do this in the first place.' She thought, completely exasperated.

She decided it would be better just get this over with and not dwell on things that she couldn't do anything about. Approaching Tony, she hugged him and he hugged her back sort of awkwardly. She knew that he was complete crap at showing any kind of emotion so she didn't hold it against him.

"Bye, Tony." She said softly.

"By, Kid." He replied just as softly.

Walking back over to the doctor, she regarded him with curiosity.

"Okay, what happens next?" She asked curiously.

"Well, I will open up a portal in here that will take us straight back to the Sanctum Sanctorum, is that alright with you Tony?" He asked in a tone of voice that clearly meant he could care less what Tony thought.

Before Tony could protest, he made a series of movements with his arm and a portal opened up in the middle of the room just as he said it would. She looked at the portal with amazement.

"Wow! That is really cool!" She said in amazement.

The good Doctor seemed to preen a little at her complement. Tony on the other hand looked pissed and just a little bit jealous. She couldn't help but snicker at the thought of Tony finally having a little bit of healthy competition. In her opinion, he needed some.

She watched as Doctor Strange stepped into the portal and then disappeared completely. Cautiously, she approached the portal and just as she was about to touch the portal with her finger his head popped back out of it causing her to jump back in shock.

"Well, are you going to come in? It is completely safe, I assure you." He reassured.

"Okay." She squeaked in shock.

Getting all her lady balls in a row, she stepped into the portal and was amazed to actually come out into the Sanctum Sanctorum on the other side. As she tried gracefully step out of it, she lost her footing and ended up kissing the floor. So much for pride and dignity. Pulling herself up off the floor, she saw that Doctor Strange seemed to be suddenly having issues keeping his red cloak under control. A small part of her thanked every deity she knew that he was too busy dealing with it to notice her sorry ass on the floor.

She knew from Tony's files that the cloak was called 'the cloak of levitation' and that it was a sentient being, so it was technically alive. What she didn't understand was why it was freaking out now when it was fine the whole time he was at the tower. Shrugging inwardly, she took a good look around while the good Doctor got his cloak under control. A small part of her thanked every deity she knew that he was too busy dealing with it to notice her sorry ass on the floor.

Suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted when she heard Doctor Strange actually hiss at his cloak to smarten up and even elbowed it twice for good measure. After that, the cloak seemed to behave itself. He cleared his throat in embarrassment.

"My apologies for that, Irena, you seem very tried from that surge of magic you tried to let loose
earlier. Would you like me to show you to where you will be staying?” He asked.

Now that he said that, she did feel extremely exhausted. Everything seemed to be catching up with her.

She nodded tiredly.

"Yes, that would be great." She replied.

"Alright, follow me this way." He said.

He led her down a series of hallways, until they reached a hallway lined with doors. She watched curiously as he chose the door on the end and opened for it her. Inside was the room of her dreams, everything was just as ornate in this room as it was in the foyer. There was a big bed in the center of the room and off to the right side of the room sat a lovely desk. On the other side of the room there was a door that she could only assume led to the bathroom. The room was beautiful. She turned to Doctor Strange to tell him as much and saw that he had a self-satisfied smirk on his face.

He must be reading her thoughts again, the jerk. She could see the pride oozing from his pores. She rolled her mismatched eyes inwardly and told him what she thought anyway.

"Doctor Strange, this room is beautiful. Thank you for letting me use it." She said gratefully.

"Please call me Stephen, Irena. It is no trouble at all and feel free to explore the Sanctum after your rest. If you need anything at all please come and find me." He replied, bowing slightly.

After agreeing that she would indeed find him if she needed anything, she bid Stephen goodnight and shut the door.

Finally, she had some time alone to process everything. What a messed up day this turned out to be. When she really thought deep down, she had to do something about her powers and what happened earlier proved it. What she hated was Tony just doing it behind her back and just dropping all of this in her lap. She hated change so damn much and yet he forced on her anyway. She wanted to figure out this stuff for herself.

Dropping her duffle bag by the desk, she pulled out 'Dark' and her phone. Pulling off her shoes, she went and plopped down on the bed. Opening her phone, she saw that she had six text messages from Darcy and winced. She didn't even get a chance to say goodbye to anybody. She wondered if that was a good thing. That would have made her emotions really go out of control and not even Stephen would have been able to stop her from blowing up the tower then.

She already missed Darcy. For the longest time, she had no friends in the tower until Darcy came along. The connection was between them was instant and they became 'evil' and 'eviler’. It was like they were platonic soul mates, sisters in arms. Looking at the last text message Darcy sent, she snorted.

*Hey shithead, Tony says you left the tower? Don't I even get a goodbye?-D*

*Sooory D, this is some complicated stuff. It about my powers, I had to leave to get help with them. It turns out they are magic not a mutation.-I*

*Oh I get it! You're a wizard, Irena, haha. Who is teaching you how to control them? Did you have to go to Hogwarts?-D*

Irena rolled her mismatched eyes, leave it to Darcy to bring up *Harry Potter* to lighten the situation.
Haha, very funny but no. I had to go to the Sanctum Sanctorum with Doctor Strange.-I

Oh OH, that hot Sorcerer! Jane has some files on him. Pretty nice to look at.-D

OMG D! you are so bad! I guess you are right, he his pretty nice to look at but this is serious business! I am stuck here for god knows how long!-I

She snorted again and shook head, Darcy always thought with the wrong body parts. But she had a valid point; he was pretty good looking for an older guy.

Don't worry so much! This is a good thing, you will be able to get control of your powers and have some eye candy to look at along the way. Plus nobody said that I couldn't visit you did they?-D

You're right D, thanks for making me feel better but I think I am gonna try and I sleep. I am super tired.-I

Sure, call me later-D

Will do, D! Ttyl!-I

After she finished texting with Darcy, she felt marginally better but she couldn't stop the tears that spilled down her cheeks. These weren't the type of emotions that would activate her powers she just needed to have a good messy cry. She wasn't so freaked out anymore but it was still hard. She was just ripped from everything she knew.

She had to remind herself that even though she wasn't living at the tower any more, she was still a Stark and Tony hadn't actually abandoned her. He was just trying to help her.

Clutching 'Dark' closer to herself, she settled into the covers a little bit more and let her body relax. She really needed sleep after everything that happened to her.

Slowly, she let herself drift off into sleep knowing that she would wake up to a whole new crazy adventure with her name written on it.
To Understand

Chapter Notes

Another chapter up and ready to go! :)

Stephen

To say that Stephen was shocked would be an understatement. When he finally agreed to go help Stark, he had no idea what to expect but he certainly didn't expect a full grown woman anything like Irena was. When Tony said 'Adopted daughter' he had expected a young girl or maybe an older teenager not a 22 year old woman with magic dripping from every pore. The magic he felt pulsating from her was like nothing he'd ever felt before.

Usually, a person had to learn the mystic arts; magic wasn't something someone was born with however this girl seemed to be exception. To think, he wasn't even going to go in the first place until Wong practically forced him to. Even though, he considered Tony Stark one of the smartest people he knew, and he was really loathe to admit that, he also considered the man to be a giant pain the ass to deal with. But Wong 'helpfully' reminded him over and over again that when he took over the Sanctum Sanctorum, his job was to police any magic going on in New York City whatever it was. So he couldn't just 'Ignore it' like he wanted to.

So, when he finally went to check the situation out, he was glad he did. There was no way on god's green earth he could leave a girl that vulnerable to deal with that much uncontrolled magic all on her own. He still couldn't believe a 4'11" slip of a girl could contain that much magic inside of her.

Entering his study, he decided the best course of action would be to meditate so he could clear his mind and think of what the proper way to deal with this would be. He hadn't had to teach anyone anything in so long he didn't think he could even do it anymore. The last time he remembered teaching anybody anything was when he was still a neurosurgeon back when he was still a royal pompous asshole and remembered being total and complete garbage at it. He would have to try and beg Wong for help at this rate.

As he tried to clear his mind, he could still feel Irena's lingering sadness. Not that he could blame her for the way she was feeling. Honestly, if he were in her shoes and had been ripped from everything he knew he would probably be feeling the same way. A few minutes later, he felt the sadness begin to dissipate and he knew that she must have fallen asleep.

He prepared himself to meditate. Just as he began to relax and his eyes began drifting shut, he felt a sharp tug around his neck and he let out an annoyed growl. As of late, his cloak was being a giant asshole and he had no idea why. It started when he decided that he would try rekindling his relationship with Christine. The cloak decided that it didn't like that idea very much and did everything in its power to wreck everything whenever he was with her. What's worse, when Irena
fell out of the portal, the cloak wanted nothing more than to 'check her out' and it actually seemed interested in her.

In fact, it still wanted to go and check her out. He had to force it to stay put. However, it just refused to listen to him.

"Oh come on! Would you behave yourself?" He hissed at the cloak in annoyance.

After a few more minutes of trying to fight with it, he gave up and just let it do what it wanted. It disengaged from him completely and decided to leave the room.

"Fine! Go and sulk you annoying red beast of burden!" He yelled.

Sighing, he went and sat cross-legged in the middle of the room. Calming himself, he shut his eyes and began his meditation.

2 Hours Later

As he exited his state of meditation, his blue eyes popped open and he let out a relaxed sigh. He felt much better and also decided on the best way to introduce Irena to the mystic arts. Getting up off of the floor, he winced as his back popped and cracked. He was not used to meditating on the floor. Normally, he would just use his cloak and levitate in place. He exited his study and decided to go and find said cloak. He had an idea of where it was. Sure enough, the cloak was levitating in front of Irena's door. He could only assume that there was something in her magic that was drawing the cloak to her.

Using his magic, he called the cloak to himself. Surprisingly, it obeyed him and settled back onto his shoulders without a problem. As much as he would like to figure out what exactly the cloak's problem was, he had bigger fish to fry at the moment. He had to start introducing Irena to the mystic arts as soon as possible before she accidently blew up something important like his sanctum.

Entering his library, he hoped to whatever god was up there that Wong was still there. He tended to come and go as he pleased so there was no guarantee he would actually be there. Sure enough, he couldn't see Wong but he could hear movement and he let out a breath he didn't even know he had been holding.

'Thank god.' He thought, relieved.

Sensing his presence, Wong poked his head out from around a series of bookshelves.

"So, how did it go?" He asked in a tone that clearly indicated that he already knew the answer to the question.

Stephen fought the urge to roll his eyes; he supposed he had that one coming with all the fight he put up about doing this earlier.

"Well, the problem is bigger than I first thought, I'll admit it. This girl has magic dripping from every pore. Hell, she almost blew Stark away with the flick of her wrist. She needs help. There was no way on god's green earth I could let her stay at the tower safely. I brought her back here with me."

He explained.

Coming out from around the bookshelves, Wong had his eyebrows slightly raised in shock and let out a low whistle. His thoughts exactly, this situation was unbelievable.

"Well, that IS a serious situation." Wong agreed.
He nodded and rubbed the side of his temple as he thought.

"She loathes change so I think starting out slow would be the best. I am thinking books, like mystic arts 101 type books." He said.

He watched with confusion as Wong began to snicker.

"What?" He asked in confusion.

"Nothing, it's just I never thought, I would actually witness the day that THE Doctor Stephen Strange actually did something that benefited somebody else completely." He laughed.

His look of confusion quickly morphed into one of annoyance.

"WONG!" He yelled in exasperation.

"Okay, okay, alright! Books on the mystic arts 101 coming right up!" Wong said, holding his hands up in surrender.

He fought the extremely immature urge to make an obscene gesture behind Wong's back as he disappeared back behind the book shelves. When Wong re-emerged moments later, he saw that he was carrying a stack of very familiar books under his arm and was pleasantly surprised. These were the same books he read when he began his training in the mystic arts. They will be perfect for Irena to learn at her own pace. She could start with reading the books, she could switch out the books with new ones whenever she wanted to and then when she felt ready he could start teaching her how to conjure her powers on command.

Watching Wong place the books on the table in front of him, he regarded him with approval.

"Thank you Wong, these will be perfect. I owe you one." He praised.

"Actually, I think you might owe me twelve at this rate." Wong said, snickering some more.

"Wong…" He warned.

Wong merely laughed and disappeared behind the shelves this time for good.

He shook his head in exasperation, apparently saving everybody from Dormammu using the Eye of Argamotto counted for absolutely nothing these days.

Seeking out Irena's emotions for a moment, he sensed that she had woken up. Perfect.

Picking up the books off the table, he put them under his arm and left the library. He sure hoped that Irena was in the mood for some light reading.

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**Irena**

Letting out a long groan, Irena cracked open her sore eyes and rubbed them. She hated when she fell asleep crying, her eyes always felt all gritty when she woke up. Looking down at herself, she realized that she hadn't even taken off her leather jacket before she passed out. Knowing that she would be here for god knows how long, she decided that she better get comfortable and set up her room how she liked it. Honestly, exploring was at the bottom of her list of crap to do for now. Getting up off of the bed, she took off her leather jacket and placed it on the chair that sat in front of the desk.
Picking up her duffle bag up from by the desk, she placed it on the bed and opened it. Sifting through its contents, she pulled out a pair of sweat pants that she swiped from Tony's wardrobe forever ago and her favorite sweat top that said 'hello there' written on it. She changed into them and after a small internal debate, just chose to just leave her bra on. With her crappy luck, Stephen would come knocking at the door and that was just a whole bunch of hell freaking no. Seeing that there was no closet in the room but a beautiful wooden wardrobe instead, she placed all her clothes inside of it.

Picking up her toiletries, she went to go and explore the bathroom. If the rest of this insane room was in any indication, she would not be disappointed with it and she was right. It was large and just as ornate as the rest of the place. It had a beautiful, large claw foot type bathtub and a pillar sink with a mirror hanging over top. This was just not fair, at this rate this room alone would make her never want to leave this place. Not that she would ever say that out loud or anything. After setting up her toiletries the way that she liked them, she left the bathroom making sure to keep her hair brush with her.

She had to deal with her crow's nest head at some point; she might as well do it now. Placing the hair brush on the desk momentarily, she took out her laptop and also placed it on the desk. After plugging it in, she turned it on and booted it up. After checking that everything was working, she picked up the brush off of the desk and took off her bandanna. She threw the bandanna onto the bed and started trying to brush out her obscenely curly hair. Every time she hit a tangle, she let out a string of curse words like a dirty trucker.

Halfway through her efforts, a knock sounded at her door and she was extremely glad that she chose to leave her bra on.

"Um, come in?" She said, although it came out more like a question.

The door swung open and she watched Stephen step into the room carrying a huge arm load of books under his arm. She looked at them curiously, she always loved a good book and these books looked particularly old and interesting. She could see that Stephen seemed happy at her reaction to the books and she could tell that he was reading her mind again. The jerk. Between him and Tony did either them know what the in the HELL privacy was?

"I take it you are feeling a little better now?" He asked knowingly.

"Of course you know I feel better you destroyer of privacy you." She thought in irritation.

"Yeah I am. What's with the books?" She asked curiously.

"I know this is difficult for you, so I thought these books would help you learn about the mystic arts at your own pace. When you finish these books, you can switch them out for new ones, read as many as you want until you are ready to take the next step." He explained.

Okay so that was actually a really a nice thing to do, as of late people seemed to forget what she wanted when they were trying to help her. Having the option to actually do things her own pace was refreshing.
"Thank you so much Stephen, you have no idea how much this helps me." She said, genuinely grateful.

She watched his shit-eating smirk morph back into a genuine smile.

"You are welcome Irena. My offer still stands; if you need anything please don't hesitate to find me." He replied, repeating his offer from before.

She thanked him again and he walked back to the door way. Before he left, he cast her one last slightly lingering glance with his intense blue eyes before exiting the room and shutting the door.

She looked at the closed door with an indescribable look on her face, still hanging onto her brush with her left hand.

"What the hell was that? Is an afro and baggy clothes the new sexy?" She thought in confusion.

Shaking her head, she decided it would just be best to ignore whatever that was. She finished brushing out her hair and threw the brush onto the bed.

She was extremely eager to get into those books he left for her. Cracking open the first one, she realized very quickly that google translate would become her best friend. At the same time, she also realized she would need to connect to the internet to use google translate. Damnit, she should have asked Stephen about the Wi-Fi while he was in the room. There was no way in hell she was going to ask him now.

Looking around, she decided to take a chance and open the desk drawers. If she wanted to leave a Wi-Fi password somewhere it would be there. Sure enough, in the second drawer she opened was a little while piece of paper sitting inside of it. No freaking way. Picking up the piece of paper, she saw that there was one word written on it. She tested it out and it was in fact the Wi-Fi password. Somehow, she couldn't even say that she was shocked anymore. After she got connected to the internet, she dove right into the books.

Sometime later, her phone beeped somewhere from the bed. Stopping what she was doing, she went and fished out her phone from the covers. She opened it and found that she had a text message from Steve. Somebody else she never got to say goodbye to. She opened the text message and almost died. Unfortunately, no matter how many times she tried to teach him how to text it never worked. He literally texted like a 90 year old man, it was hilarious. The text looked like autocorrect puked all over it. Seconds later, she received a more legible text that she could actually read.

*Hey doll face, so you left the tower without saying goodbye to Steve and me? We're hurt-S*

The text came from Steve's phone but it wasn't Steve it was Bucky. She winced, Steve and Bucky were like the big brothers she never had, especially Bucky. When Bucky first came to the tower, he was such a damn mess from what HYDRA did to him and she felt for him. She tried to help him any way she could and Tony hated it. She eventually got to Tony to tell her why he hated it so much. He told her that Bucky killed his parents under the control of HYDRA and while she felt terrible for Tony, she couldn't blame Bucky for what HYDRA did. She did end up being able to convince Tony to let him stay but Tony would have nothing to do with him and she understood that.

*I'm sorry Bucky, I had no choice. It's my powers, they are out of control. Tony enlisted Doctor Strange to help me control them so I had to go to the sanctum with him.-I*

It was completely odd that Bucky could text so much better than Steve considering they came from the same time; she supposed HYDRA ended up being good for something after all.
What?! He left you in the hands of a complete stranger, A MALE complete stranger? Is he insane? If this guy hurts you in any way Steve and I will fuck him up!-S

She could help but laugh out loud at Bucky's text. He was ever the big brother.

Bucky relax, I am okay. Believe me this is a good thing. I need to get control over these powers before I blow something up. When I get more settled you could probably even visit me if you wanted to.-I

You better believe we will, you take care of yourself, doll face.-S

I always do, Big Brother. Ttyl!-I

Ttyl, doll face.-S

Putting down the phone, she let out a large sigh. She was a little more than pissed at Tony for not telling anybody she was leaving. Was it THAT big of a deal that she was trying to get her powers under control? Or was it because he had to get Stephen Strange to help her? Like was Tony THAT immature that nobody could know that he had to get help with something he couldn't figure out? She frowned. Yes, yes he was. Stupid Tony.

Deciding that she really needed to get her mind off of missing everybody, she went back to her books. She didn't stop until the clock on her computer told her it was around 3:00 am and even then she wasn't going to stop until her stomach reminded her that she hadn't eaten anything in god knows how long. Well, damn. She still didn't want to explore but it looked like she didn't have much of a choice. She supposed she would have to put her big-girl panties on and go and find the kitchen because she needed to eat something before she hit the floor.

Quietly, she exited her bedroom and walked down the hall bypassing all of the doors. She exited the hallway and passed many rooms filled will all kinds of items. From Tony's files, she knew that these items were called relics. She couldn't believe how many there were and they were all humming with magic. It was like nothing that she had ever seen before. Suddenly, she felt a weird pull that she had never felt before. Was that her magic?

Something told her to follow the pull so she did. It took her to a glass case with the most beautiful necklace encased inside of it. It was made of a blue stone carved into the shape of a tear drop and had a silver chain. On the side of the stone, somebody had carved an intricate sliver dragon into it and the stone itself seemed to emit a soft glow. It was calling to her and she didn't understand why. Just as she made to reach out to it, a soft feminine voice called out to her inside of her head.

Not yet, little Guardian. Now is not the time.

She somehow knew that the voice inside of her head was not bad but it still scared the crap out of her.

Leaving the room quickly, she managed to find the kitchen without stopping to explore any other rooms for the time being.

When she thought of the adventure that she was going to have, this was so not what she had in mind.
To Make Progress...Sort of

Chapter Summary

Hey all! Here's another chapter of this thing! Got plenty more to go!

Irena

4 Weeks had already passed since that faithful day Tony came into her work shop and completely messed up her entire life on her. While she had gotten a lot more comfortable living at the sanctum, she still had a long way to go with her magic. The books that Stephen had given her turned out to be a huge god-send. They really helped her understand the mystic arts better and lessened her fears about her powers. While her control was still absolute crap, at least she could say that she gained enough of it that she stopped blowing up stuff in her sleep anyway. Unfortunately, a new really frustrating issue had surfaced. She now felt ready to take the next step in getting control of her powers but every time she tried to talk to Stephen about it he was too busy with his girlfriend Christine to help her.

Now normally, none of this would even phase her but she had her life ripped apart from underneath her to get his help and now that she was asking for it he was ignoring her! It royally pissed her off, damnit! Ugh, now she went and pissed herself off even more thinking about it too much. Unable to concentrate any longer, she closed the book that she had sitting in front of and got up form her desk. Leaving her room, she decided that she would head down to the library. If there was one place in the sanctum that she could call her favorite place to be, it was the library. The entire room hummed with a calm sort of energy that she really enjoyed. Also, Wong was usually down there and he was all kinds of fun to be around. He always had the best stories about Stephen when he was training at Kamar-Taj.

As she passed through the rooms where most of the relics were kept, she began to feel the pull of the necklace she came across the first night she came here. The pull was strong, like it was begging her to come and find it. She had to leave before she did something very stupid that she would regret.

Leaving the vicinity of the necklace, she began to feel something else that made her want to go back the way she came. She could actually FEEL Stephen and Christine. She fought the urge not to vomit all over the floor. All she wanted to do now was gouge her brain out of her head with a giant spoon and bleach it. Moving quickly, she made her down to the library and took a seat at the table that sat next to the bookshelves.

"Sweet tap dancing Jesus Christ." She muttered, trying to scrub away the images that were assaulting her brain.

Hearing her, Wong came out from behind the shelves and sat across from her. He regarded her with curiosity.

"What happened to you, little sister? He asked curiously.

"Stephen and Christine were...augh." She couldn't even bring herself to say the words. "And I could feel them!"
Wong’s features went from curious to severely grossed out.

"Okay, that's nasty. The tips and tricks I taught you to keep out that stuff didn't work?" He asked again.

She shook her and Wong frowned.

"Damn girl, I'm sorry." He said.

A few days after she got to the sanctum, Wong began teaching how to block people from reading her mind and feeling other people's emotions. Because it was either that or punch Stephen in the face repeatedly at the rate he was reading her thoughts. Unfortunately, she was still learning and sometimes it didn't always work. Apparently, it decided to mess up when she needed it most because of course it had to.

'What a freaking surprise that is." She thought sarcastically.

Thinking this, her previous anger at Stephen returned with a vengeance.

"If Stephen would actually teach me what the hell I had to leave my life for instead of sucking face with Christine, I wouldn't be in this freaking mess!" She yelled.

"God, sometimes I just wanna take his dummy, dumb face and just..." She trailed off smashing her left fist into her palm repeatedly.

She watched as Wong snickered at her antics and she fought the urge to roll her eyes at him.

"Oh thanks for the sympathy, Wong." She deadpanned.

Wong held up his hands in surrender.

"Okay, okay, I'm sorry. Would you like me to try and talk to him? Despite that he has learned a lot from his training at Kamar-Taj and what The Ancient One taught him, he still tends to think with his head crammed in his ass." He said, exasperation coloring his tone.

She let out a huge relieved sigh. He really couldn't have said that any better. Honestly, she was eternally grateful somebody gave a crap about her sanity.

"Oh, that would be excellent! Thank you so much!" She said gratefully.

"No problem, I honestly don't know what kind of good it will do, but it's better than doing nothing." He replied.

She agreed completely. At this rate, if she tried to do something about it the results would be a whole lot less pretty.

After talking with Wong a bit more about less aggravating subject matter, she bid him goodbye and left the library. Even though she felt a lot less angry, she decided that she would leave the sanctum and go retrieve a caffeinated beverage. She knew that she would probably catch all kinds of hell from Stephen for leaving but at this point she could care less. Making sure she had all her mental shields in place the best she could, she went back to her room quickly this time ignoring the pull of the necklace completely. She had too many things on her mind at the moment.

Entering the bathroom, she checked herself over and made sure she was fit for public viewing. She decided to forego the make up this time. Her skin looked pretty good and she didn't mind her
freckles. She threw her dark curly hair into a messy braid and left the bathroom. She gave herself a quick once over and decided that she was okay. When it came to clothing, comfort always came first. It was almost always a pair of skinny jeans, her Doc Martins and some sort of band tee. This time, it was Guns N' Roses. Putting on her leather jacket, she grabbed her iPod and grabbed her phone just in case of emergency.

Exiting her room, she could only feel Stephen's emotions and breathed a sigh of relief. Christine must have left. She thanked every god above.

Moving as quietly as possible, she tip-toed her way into the foyer of the Sanctum and made her way to the exit. Just as her hand touched the handle of the door to the exit, something grabbed onto to her braid and yanked hard. She almost had to cram her entire fist in her mouth to stop the shocked shriek that tried to spill out of it. Whirling around, she saw that Stephen's cloak was hovering in front of her still attached to her braid. She tried desperately to detach her braid from it to no avail. She could feel it's emotions. It was acting like a giant puppy who thought one of it's favorite people ever was leaving and never ever coming back.

"Oh come on you silly cloak! I'm only going to get a coffee, I will be right back!" She hissed.

By the time she managed to dislodge her braid from the grip of the cloak, she could feel Stephen enter the room before she could see him.

'Oh COME ON! Why is it always me?' She thought with despair.

When she could finally see him, she wished for the second time in her life that the ground would just open up and swallow her whole. He was not wearing his usual 'sorcerer garb' as she called it in her mind. Instead, he had on a crisp white dress type shirt rolled up at the sleeves rolled up to his arms and a pair of black casual type pants. All of which fit him in a way that should be illegal and made the pit of her stomach to funny things that she didn't like. He regarded her and the cloak with amusement.

"Now, what is going on here?" He asked curiously.

"I just wanted to go take a walk and go and grab a cup of coffee." She explained.

She watched the amused look on Stephen's face morph into something akin to annoyance. For some reason, she didn't like it.

"Irena, you know that's not a good idea! What if you lost control of your powers and accidentally blew something up?" He said imploringly.

That was it, the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. She couldn't help it, she snapped.

"Well, maybe if you spend less time sucking face with Christine and more time helping me like you are supposed to. That wouldn't be so much of a problem now would it?!" She snarled angrily.

At her angry words, Stephen's mouth opened and closed repeatedly making him look like a fish out of water. She could sense that he knew that she was right. For a split second, she felt herself lose total control of her emotions. Her nostrils flared and her eyes darkened. However, before anything could happen, she heard that same voice from the other night when she went to touch the necklace. It was trying to calm her down.

No, little Guardian. Calm yourself and let it go.

She did what the voice told her to do. As much as Stephen pissed her off, she didn't really want to
She managed to finally detach the cloak from herself and shooed it back to him. With a final parting glare, she exited the Sanctum and slammed the door behind her all before Stephen could utter another word to her.

**Stephen**

Scrubbing the side of his face, he sighed. He just messed up big time and he knew it. He knew he wasn't giving her the attention she needed or deserved in favor of spending time with Christine and it wasn't fair. Not only was he an asshole for that, but she just proved him wrong about her control anyway. He watched her just about lose control but she somehow managed not to right after he pretty much told her she was a walking ticking time bomb waiting to go off.

'Way to go, jackass.' He thought to himself.

He had to fix this somehow. When he stared into those mismatched eyes of hers, he was immediately reminded of what he did to Christine when he was trying desperately to find a way to fix his hands before he found out about Kamar-Taj. He was doing exactly the same thing to Irena now, being a giant asshole. Christine called him out on it then, and Irena called him out on it now in exactly the same way. He wouldn't let history repeat itself. When Irena got back, he would try to make it up to her any way he could.

Looking at the cloak, he watched it do the cloak equivalent of flipping him off before levitating off somewhere and he couldn't even be mad at it. Honestly, he deserved it.

Walking over to the couch that sat in the foyer, he sat down on it and patiently waited for Irena to return.

**Irena**

Exiting the coffee shop with an iced coffee in tow, Irena felt so much better. Yes, she was still annoyed as all hell at Stephen but she didn't want to commit murder any more at least. Adjusting her headphones, she walked along the street with a hop in her step. Every so often, she would take a pull of her iced coffee. It felt so good to get some fresh air and not be surrounded by a bunch of crappy emotions that didn't belong to her. She finished up her iced coffee more quickly than she would have liked.

She knew that she would have to go back at some time, but decided that she would take her sweet time and enjoy the freedom she had while it lasted. Quickly than she would have liked, she already found herself already back in front of the Sanctum. Sighing, she pushed open the door and entered the magical building. She barely had the chance to get herself organized and take her headphones out of her ears before the cloak was already on top of her wrapping itself around her. It was almost vibrating. Again, she compared it to a puppy greeting one of its favorite people.

She had to admit that it was pretty funny.

"See, I told you I was coming back!" She giggled at the cloak's antics.

"The cloak adores you, my dear." A familiar deep voice said.

Her head shot up and she looked in the direction the voice was coming from. She saw Stephen sitting on a couch a little ways away and he was looking at her with THAT look again. That same
look he was looking at her with when she was trying to brush out her hair and he brought her the books. His stormy blue eyes were regarding her with warmth and she liked it way more than she should.

"Come here." He mumbled.

Between the timber of his voice and the way he was looking at her, she had no choice but to comply with him. Slowly, she made her way over to where he was seated and sat down next to him. The cloak tried to drape itself over both her and Stephen the best it could. Under his intense gaze, she began to fidget nervously. She opened her mouth to say something but he hushed her before she could even get one word out.

"I am so sorry, Irena. I am being a complete asshole to you. You deserve so much better, somebody who will actually take the time to teach you how to control your gift instead of just blowing you off but you are stuck with me. I promise I will do everything I can to teach you from now on." He promised.

She sensed that he was being nothing but sincere. She knew that he was a very proud person so admitting he messed up was not easy for him. Looking down at his hands, she saw that they were shaking badly and her eyes softened considerably. Not knowing what else she could do, she reached down and gently grabbed his large hand in her small one. This seemed to calm him some and he looked at her gratefully.

"It's okay Stephen. None of this is easy for anybody and it isn't always going to be rainbows and butterflies. I forgive you." She replied sincerely.

Not only could she feel the relief emanating from him, but she could see it on his handsome features too. Finally, she felt that his emotions were beginning to return to normal and for that she was grateful. This whole entire situation was becoming entirely too way too intense for her liking. Suddenly, Stephen regarded her with curiosity and the moment was broken completely. She was extremely thankful for that.

"Would you like to practice summoning your magic now or later?" He asked curiously.

She thought for a moment. She felt pretty damn good so she supposed there was no harm in trying to do it now.

"Now is good." She decided.

Smiling at her, Stephen gave her hand one final squeeze before rising from the couch and helping her up.

"Alright, follow me." He said, placing a large hand on the small of her back and leading her out of the foyer. The cloak followed behind them like an obedient puppy.

Feeling the warmth emanating from his hand on her back, she fought to keep the bizarre feeling the pit of her stomach from bubbling up.

'For crap's sake, stop it, stop it, STOP IT! He is only being nice to you so get a damn grip and stop it!' She thought to herself.

She hoped to HELL that she was doing a good enough job blocking him from her thoughts and feelings or she was in some serious trouble.

He led her into the basement beyond the library into an empty room. The room had a cement floor
and brick walls. In the center sat a table and one chair. Off in the corner, there were a couple of weapons. It led her to believe that he used this room to practice combat or his spells before. Walking to the table, she hopped up onto it and sat down. She watched Stephen sit in the chair and face her.

"Alright, you should be able to practice in this place without blowing up anything important." He said jokingly.

She inwardly rolled her eyes. Yep, he was so back to normal.

"Har, har, so very funny." She mock deadpanned.

She stuck out her tongue at him and he merely smirked back at her.

"Now, what I want to you try and do is focus on the good emotions instead of the bad. You should have much more success controlling your magic when you summon it." He explained.

Looking at him with slight apprehension, she did what he asked of her. It took her a lot of tries but eventually she started to feel the pull of her magic. It was weak but it was there. Instead of her eyes turning pitch black, they glowed a soft blue and a small ball of energy appeared in the center of her palm. It was very weak but it was there. She lost her concentration and it disappeared but she had it. It was right there and she didn't blow anybody up!

"HA! I DID IT!" She exclaimed.

Stephen looked at her beaming with pride.

"That's the way to do it!" He agreed.

She continued to practice until she felt her energy wane and she realized she used too much of it. Suddenly, a huge dizzy spell came over her and she knew that she was in trouble. She felt herself begin to lean forward and she couldn't stop it. As she started to slip off of the table, strong arms caught her before she found the floor. She felt herself being scooped up into said arms.

She enjoyed these arms, they were warm and comfortable.

Somewhere in the recesses of her screwed up fuzzy mind, she knew it was Stephen carrying her probably to her room because she carelessly used up way too much energy. She also knew that she was letting herself enjoy it way too much, but in her messed up state she couldn't bring to herself to care very much.

She was so screwed on so many levels and she knew it.
Irena

Letting out a painful, long suffering groan, Irena cracked open her sore eyes. She had a pounding headache like she was suffering from her worst hangover ever and she's had some doozies no thanks to Darcy. She tried to recall the events from the previous day that made her feel so freaking miserable. She remembered talking to Wong about Stephen ignoring her and feeling…ugh. She didn't want to think that about that. After that, she wanted to leave the Sanctum to get a coffee. She remembered Stephen calling her a walking ticking time bomb…that was awesome…and then telling him to basically to get bent which felt very awesome and liberating.

After that, she tried to leave the Sanctum, but she had to pry Stephen's crazy cloak off of her first. She wondered what the deal with that was. Not that she minded, she thought it was funny but she was curious. Why did it like her so much? Was it her magic? Did she smell funny? Shaking her head, she let that train of thought go for now, she was distracting herself from the real problem at hand.

She left and got her coffee. She remembered feeling a lot better after that. She got back to the Sanctum and the cloak jumped her again. After that, Stephen apologized to her. Oh sweet lord almighty. She remembered the conversation. She remembered the feelings and the sheer intensity of it. She rubbed the side of her head and sighed again.

'Oh girl, this is going to go sideways so fast and you know it.' She thought.

After that, she remembered him trying to help her to summon her powers without blowing anything up in the process; she must have used too much magical energy and passed out cold.

'Gee Stephen, thank you so much for warning me that this might happen.' She thought annoyed.

Now only one question remained, how in the seven depths of hell did she back in her room?

She thought really hard for a moment and then the light bulb came on. Stephen must have carried her back here. Just thinking about it made her turn a fiery shade of red that probably hadn't been invented until just right now. She let out a long groan and put her head in her hands. Just how in the hell would she ever face him again?

Deciding that she couldn't deal with anything else until she felt human again, she got up and headed for the shower. After she got out of the shower, she felt marginally better. She decided she would just throw on Tony's old sweat pants and a black tank top she used as pyjama's because to hell with doing or wearing anything else right now. She threw up her hair into a messy bun and exited the bathroom. She heard her computer chime indicating that somebody was trying to call her via skype. Sitting down at her desk, she opened her laptop and saw that it was from Darcy.
Thank the freaking lord, Darcy was exactly who she needed at the moment. She clicked the 'receive call' button and Darcy's face popped up on the screen.

"Hey girl, what's up?" Darcy said cheerfully.

She watched as Darcy took in her appearance and frowned.

"Wow, what in the hell happened to you, girl. Did you and Doctor Strange go and get wasted last night?" Darcy asked curiously.

She couldn't help but snort at that. All she could think about now was what Stephen getting shit-faced would look like. Way to go Darcy.

"Unfortunately no, he was trying to teach me how to summon my powers the right way. I used too much energy and passed out cold. He had to carry me back up here. Apparently, using too much magical energy equals feeling like I have the worst hangover ever." She explained to Darcy.

"Wait, back up and rewind here. He carried you back up to your room? How sweet is that, you have your own person knight in shining armor! You lucky, bitch you!" Darcy laughed.

She inwardly face-palmed, leave it to Darcy to pick that one thing out of the entire sentence.

"Oh my god D, out of everything I just told you THAT is what you pick out from that entire sentence." She said in mock exasperation.

"Of course, that was the most important thing in the sentence! Who doesn't want to be carried to their room by a guy that could be considered sex on a stick? It was just too bad you were passed out." Darcy joked.

She frowned and started chewing at her lips. It took Darcy about 2.0 seconds to figure out what her problem was.

"OH, oh, you really like him don't you?" Darcy asked knowingly.

"Um, no?" She said unconvincingly to even her own ears.

"Oh girl, it's okay! Any girl with a set of working lady balls would. The man is fiune." Darcy giggled.

She rolled her eyes, she was about to come back with some smart ass response when she heard a weird shuffling sound at the outside of her door.

'What in the hell was THAT? She wondered.

"Hang on, D. I hear something weird." She said, getting up from her chair.

Going to the door, she opened it and in came Stephen's cloak. She looked at it with shock, just what in the hell was happening? Sticking her head further out the door, she found out what the issue was really quickly and was realizing more and more that being magical sometimes sucked big huge chunks.

She could hear that Stephen and Christine were having some kind of disagreement and she could feel it too. However, feeling these emotions were a lot better than the other ones she had to endure before. These ones just made her feel really pukey and very crappy not that she wasn't already feeling like that anyway. They were talking loud enough that she could make out some of the words
they were saying. She flinched when she heard her name came up once or twice.

Why did it always feel like she was messing up everybody's lives all the time?

Sighing, she stuck her head back in the door just in time to hear Darcy yelling "WHAT JANE!" from the computer and she held back a shudder, she never quite figured out how Darcy put up with Jane's endless crap all the time.

She went and sat back down at her desk chair. She was not at all shocked that the cloak followed her and draped itself over her. It even tried to wrap itself around her and she kind of found it comforting. Looking back her computer screen, she saw that Darcy was looking at her with shock written all over her features.

"What the HELL? Is that..IS THAT Doctor Strange's cloak? That's insane and hilarious at the same time." Darcy laughed.

"I know, it's been glued to me the whole time I've been here and hell if I know why." She laughed back.

Suddenly, Darcy got really quiet really fast and she could sense that something was not right at all.

"D, what's up?" She asked, worry coloring her tone.

"Um shithead, I am sorry to get all serious on you but I have to tell you something and you have to promise me that you won't go all bat-shit on me okay?" Darcy said seriously.

She swallowed hard. Now she was feeling ill, very rarely was Darcy ever THIS serious.

"Um okay?" She said uncertainly.

"A couple of days ago, I heard Tony talking. He hired some new mechanic to take your place, I am so sorry but I thought you would wanna hear this from me rather than trying to choke down the crap that he would try and feed you. She started today and that stupid idiot put her in your room! Granted he has the emotional capacity of a freaking tea spoon and wouldn't find anything wrong with what he did but still who does that stuff like that?" Darcy both explained and wondered at the same time.

Looking at Darcy, she tried to process what was just explained to her but she was having great difficulty doing it. She knew that Darcy was right, Tony DID have the emotional capacity of a tea spoon and he wouldn't understand why any of what he did was wrong but WHAT. IN. THE. HELL. She couldn't even believe it. Somebody was in her space, using her tools and probably screwing it all up.

"D-Darcy, I think I have to go now, okay? P-please know I am not pissed at you okay?" She struggled to get the words out.

She saw that Darcy's face had softened in understanding.

"It's okay girlie, just please text me later or something okay?" Darcy asked pleadingly.

"Of course." She murmured.

Softly, she closed the lid of her laptop and gently let her forehead rest on it with a small 'thump'. For a moment, she just tried to get her breathing under control and tried not to hyperventilate. She honestly felt like her head was about to explode. Her emotions were so completely messed up that she couldn't even lose control of her powers if she tried. A choked sob threatened to escape her
throat and she could not hold back the tears that burned her eyes. In an effort to bring her some more
comfort, the cloak tightened itself around her and it DID make her feel better. Hearing her computer
chime again, she knew it was Tony and just screw him right now.

For a good solid ten minutes, she just sat in her chair and tried to get her emotions under control.
Once she felt mostly back under control, she decided to leave her room she knew that just sitting
there and thinking about it would make it ten times worse. Clutching Stephen's cloak closer to her
body, she wandered down the hallway not caring that the cloak was sort of dragging behind her
because she was so short. She didn't think the cloak cared much either. In the back of her mind, she
could sense the necklace too, but she was too upset to be bothered with it.

Entering the kitchen, she started getting the things together to make a batch of chocolate chip
cookies. When she used to live at the orphanage, whenever she was super sad she always made a
batch of chocolate chip cookies with Mrs. Williams and always felt better afterwards. She hoped it
would help her to feel better now. Clutching Stephen's cloak around her, she pulled out a folding
step stool that Stephen and Wong kept next to fridge for her because she was so short and it was hard
for her to reach everything. Putting the step stool in front of the counter, she clumsily climbed up
onto it and got to work.

She was so on autopilot that she didn't even sense that Stephen entered the kitchen. She did however
hear him. Turning the entrance, she saw that Stephen looked about as miserable as she felt. He was
still in his night clothes, his hair was all disheveled and he had five o'clock shadow really bad. She
could see that even though his hands were at his sides that they were still shaking badly. She
wondered what in the blue crap he and Christine had argued about. Clearly, it had upset him a lot.

Barely acknowledging him, she went back to her bowl of ingredients sitting on the counter and
continued working. She didn't bother to look up at him until she sensed that he was right next to her.
When she finally did again, she wasn't shocked to find that even with the stool he still managed to be
taller than her. He looked at her with worry clear in his stormy blue eyes.

"What happened to you, my sweet girl?" He asked softly, stroking the top of her messy head.

"Tony hired a new mechanic to replace me and he put her in my room!" She sobbed.

For a split second, everything stopped and Stephen's emotions were all over the place. After that, it
was pure adulterated anger. She knew that she had to stop him from losing it and going to the tower
to magically pound the tar out of Tony. As much as she would enjoy watching that, it would solve
nothing at the moment. Tony was her dad and she knew that however upset the situation made that
wasn't trying to be a jerk to her on purpose. She also knew that Stephen was acting in such a way
because the situation upset her so much. She had to do something to calm him down before he did
something that he would regret later.

She did the only thing that she could think of doing, what she did the first time his emotions were out
of control. She put the spatula down and grabbed his shaking hand. His emotions slowed down and
he looked at her with a look that clearly said 'You won't let me go and end this asshole for you why
now?' The cloak could sense it too and tried to wrap around him.

"Stephen no it's just not worth it. Tony has the emotional capacity of a damn tea spoon and probably
has no clue what he even did wrong." She sighed.
Stephen let out a frustrated sigh but relented.

"Alright, fine." He relented.

Giving him a look of relief, she let go of his hand and picked up the spatula again. Though she would never actually get the gonads to say it out loud, she hoped Stephen would start stroking her head again it was incredibly calming.

"What are you making?" He asked curiously.

"Chocolate chip cookies whenever I was sad or upset at the orphanage, I would make them with Mrs. Williams and it would make me feel a lot better." She explained.

"Wanna help me?" She added.

She watched as Stephen frowned and looked at his scarred, shaking hands. She could sense just how much they bothered him.

"I don't think that would be wise." He muttered.

She fought not to roll her eyes outright; she would have to find some way to show him she didn't care about his scars or his shaky hands. Making cookies was supposed to be messy anyway.

"Stephen, stop." She said softly.

"Who cares about your scars or that your hands shake, I like you just the way you are. They're just scars, it's okay I promise, look at this." She said, pushing the cloak out of the way and lifting up her shirt.

She showed him three angry scars that were on her lower back. She watched his eyes darken considerably and felt fury rolling off of him in waves. She knew that it wasn't directed at her but the person who gave her the scars. Her mismatched eyes widened at the potency of it.

"Stephen, it's okay calm down. It happened when I was eight years old and they guy is rotting away in jail." She explained quickly.

He gave her a look that clearly said 'elaborate right now, please' so she did.

"The whole time that I stayed at the orphanage, I only ever went to one foster home and that was it. I went there with two other girls, and they were two and four years old. I was eight, I had to protect them. I knew when we went there that it was going to be bad, the mother was a damn coward and father liked to use the belt keep us in line. Those girls were so young; I knew the parents only wanted the money you get from doing foster care. I had to protect them. One day the father got out of control, I snapped and lost control of my powers. That was the first only time I actually hurt somebody with them. After that, the coward mother finally grew a pair and called the cops. He went to jail and all three of us went back. "She finished.

Stephen still looked really angry and she sighed.

"Look, I didn't tell you all of this make you angry I swear. I told you because well, scars are just scars and they just apart of your past. I know it's really hard, believe me, but you shouldn't let them dictate your future, hmm?" She said softly.

Looking at her with 'the look' as she now called it, his eyes softened considerably and he grabbed her by the wrist spatula and all. He pulled her to himself and enveloped her into a hug. After getting over
her initial shock at the gesture, she melted into the hug. He felt so very warm and safe.

"Oh my poor sweet, brave, wise girl. Nothing like that will ever happen to you again, I swear it." He mumbled, threading his hand through her hair.

"Mmm" She murmured, nuzzling her head against his chest. She was enjoying the contact way too much but she couldn't bring herself to care at the moment. She could sense the sincerity flowing from him and she believed him. She could sense that something had changed between the two of them and for once she didn't get caught up in freaking out about it. She just enjoyed it instead.

He pulled back from the hug and looked at her affectionately.

"Let's get started on those cookies, shall we?" He exclaimed.

She could tell he was trying to be goofy to make her feel better and it was working. She and Stephen started putting the cookie dough together. She talked about nonsense stuff with him and she tried to put the crappy day behind her. She even let him crack the eggs even though she had to pick a butt-load of shells out of them. After the first batch of cookies went into the oven, Stephen shooed her over to the little table and chairs that sat in the corner of the kitchen. She had no choice but to comply with him. Sensing that she still needed more comfort, the cloak still stayed wrapped around her as she went to sit down.

She watched in awe as he used magic to put another batch of cookies in the oven. After he did that, he used his magic to put on a pot of tea. She could only hope that she could get that good with her magic one day. After he was finished, he levitated everything onto the table and sat down with her. Together they had a cup of tea and ate the first batch of cookies in a comfortable silence.

It was very calm and relaxing until Wong suddenly appeared into the kitchen and tried to shove three cookies in his mouth at once. The spectacle he made her almost spit out her tea and cookie as she tried to hold back a laugh.

It was just what she needed at the moment.

Still, she had so many thought niggling at the back of her mind. She still felt like a life-wrecker, was she wrecking Stephen's life by being here? What was with that necklace? Why was she born with this magic and why did the cloak like her so much? There were so many un-answered questions that were driving her nuts.

Suddenly, she could sense a presence that was neither Wong nor Stephen. But she felt that it was good and that it maybe had something to do with the voice that she constantly heard inside of her head. The voice suddenly filed her head.

_Calm yourself my little guardian, sometimes the path we want to choose is not the one we must take. All will be well._
Irena

It had been exactly one week since Darcy told her what Tony did. Even though she tried so hard not to think about it, she did more than what was probably healthy. Deep down, she knew that he meant no harm with what he did and he was just trying to find somebody to fix stuff for him while she was gone. But did he really have to put this chick in her room? Just thinking about somebody messing with her stuff was giving her the shivers. Plus, from the information that Darcy had been telling her she wasn't even a very good mechanic. So why in the hell did Tony not get rid of her? Ugh, she needed to think of something else.

Pulling one of the books she had strewn all over her desk closer to her, she began flipping through it. It was a book on different types of combative spells, she had already read it before but in her depressed state she hadn't felt like switching her books out. Her magic was nowhere near good enough to actually use any of the spells but the book itself was still very interesting to read. The one thing that she did notice had gotten better was her overall control of her magic. She could now summon and dismiss her magic whenever she wanted. It was still very weak but at least she wasn't 'blowing crap up' as she used to put it anymore. So that was a big plus.

The more she thought about it, the more she wondered if she should just go back to the tower all together. She came to get control of her wayward magic and she did that. Her emotions hadn't made her lose control of her magic since the first week she had gotten here. Maybe it was just time for her to go back. She could re-gain control of her room and workspace that way anyway. Suddenly, she felt a weird, creepy jolt of awareness that told her that it might be a good idea to just hold that thought for now.

Shaking her head, she dispelled all of those thoughts and went back to her book. Seconds later a new set of thoughts entered her mind. This time they were about Stephen. Of course they were, if she wasn't thinking about what Tony did she was thinking about Stephen. The stupid little girl crush she had on him or whatever the hell it was getting out of control. It didn't help he seemed to be doing everything in his power to make it worse, whether he realized he was doing it or not. Since baking the cookies with him, something between the two of them changed and it was safe to say that she liked it a little too much.

Suddenly, she was jolted from her thoughts by a knock on her door. She could sense that it was Stephen.

"Think of the devil and he shall appear." She thought with mock exasperation.

"Come in?" She said uncertainly, she never knew what she was going to get when he walked through the door.
The door swung open and in walked Stephen with a warm smile. She watched his cloak levitate into the room after him. Immediately, the cloak levitated up to her and draped itself around her in what she now called the 'cloak version' of a hug. This was something she had come to enjoy immensely.

"How are you feeling today?" He asked warmly.

She watched apprehensively as he approached her desk and leaned against it. He was giving her a look that she couldn't quite decipher.

"I'm feeling better, um, what's up?" She replied, not knowing whether she should be curious or just try to somehow run away as fast as she could.

"How versed are you in the art of weaponless combat? One day I would like to teach you how to merge your spells with combat so I would like to spar with you to test your skills if you are willing." He explained

Wow, okay, so she was not expecting that. She knew that she was to learning to control her magic but she didn't know that he wanted to teach her all that. She thanked every god above that she asked Steve and Bucky to teach her how to fight. Originally, they weren't going to as per her feminine sensibilities and all, but after she had trouble with a couple of male S.H.I.E.L.D agents they agreed to teach her. She even ended up convincing Natasha to teach her a couple of things too.

"I'm actually pretty versed, I accept your challenge." She said cheekily, deciding that she might as well have some fun with this situation.

Stephen smirked at her in a way that made the pit of her stomach do funny things that she enjoyed a little too much.

"Alright then, meet me in the practice room in five minutes." He said, giving her a parting wink.

He called the cloak back to himself and left the room.

Realizing she was still staring at the empty doorway, she shook her head. She was sure she had a stupid goofy look plastered onto her face too. What in the hell was wrong with her? She never had any other male ever affect her like this before and it was really unnerving her. She had to let these stupid feelings go before everything went sideways like usually always did. She refused to be responsible for screwing up a relationship. Judging from that argument she heard Stephen and Christine having, she already was and she wasn't about to make it worse.

Sighing softly, she got up and went to find some suitable clothing to spar in. She thanked her lucky stars that she decided bring what she called her work out clothes with her. They would have to do. They consisted of a stretchy black tank top with wide straps and a pair of black yoga type pants. She also had a pair of sneaker type shoes that would have to work too. If they didn't she would have to go it bare feet which she didn't really want to do.

Throwing her hair up into a messy bun, she made sure that all of her hair was secure. The last time she sparred with Bucky, she had it in a braid and he yanked on it hard causing her to end up ass over tea kettle on the floor. He was such a dirty fighter; she was pissed at him for days after he pulled that stupid stunt. Knowing how Stephen operated, she wasn't taking any chances with that one.

She left her room and made her way down to the 'practice room' as it was now dubbed. It was the same one she used to practice summoning her magic. Entering the room, she saw that Stephen was waiting for her leaning against the table. She saw that he moved the table over to the side to get the maximum space out of the room. She also saw that while he had on his 'sorcerer garb', the cloak was...
nowhere to be found which was probably a good thing because she could only imagine how the cloak would interfere with the fight. While that would be totally freaking hilarious, it would help absolutely nothing.

Walking to the center of the room, she did a few quick stretches she hadn't sparred with anybody in so long and she didn't want to throw anything out. How embarrassing would that be? She could sense Stephen watching her intently and she fought to keep a blush from rising onto her cheeks.

'Oh for craps sake girl, get a damn grip! Do you want the fight to be over before it even starts?' She thought to herself, inwardly shaking her head.

At the rate she was going, it would be. She had to get her head screwed back on straight before she did something really embarrassing. Finishing up her stretching, she watched as Stephen approached the center of the room and got into position.

"Are you ready?" He asked.

She got into position and nodded.

"Good!" He growled, coming after her.

She barely dodged the incoming attack; she was not expecting him to be so fast for his height and size. His movements were graceful and swift compared to the usual clunky and heavy movements she associated with Bucky and Steve. She was going to have to find a different way to fight this fight before she got her ass handed to her. She continued to dodge and block every kick and punch until she miss-stepped and he landed a good kick to her ribs. She let out a painful hiss and fought not to double over. Okay so that really freaking hurt but now she had a plan. She was going to pull what she called a 'Natasha'. She acted more hurt then she actually was. If she could trick him into coming closer to her, she might able to actually land a hit. It worked and he came closer. However, he seemed to know what she had planned. She rushed him but he still managed to dodge every punch and kick.

'OH COME ON!' She thought in annoyance.

The only way she could end this, or try to anyway, was pin him up against a wall and there was no guarantee that it would work. Before she could even put that idea into practice, he managed to disappear from in front of her and re-appear behind her leaving her completely off guard she was torn between being in shock and wanting to yell at him for cheating. Before she could do anything, however, she felt Stephen place his large hands on her hips. Whatever she was going to say to him died on her lips and she froze in place. For a moment she wondered what on god's green earth he was doing until it hit her, oh HELL no. Unfortunately, she wasn't as good at hiding her thoughts from him as she thought she was.

When she and Bucky were sparring once, he being the dirty fighter that he was managed to get behind her and he grabbed her by the hips. Trying to be funny, he squeezed them and she went numb. She collapsed onto the floor like a sack of bricks. The worst part was she had no control over it and she had no idea what why it happened. Somehow, the memory must have slipped into her mind during the fight and he read her thoughts, again with the violating of her privacy. Sure enough, he squeezed gently and she tried to collapse into the floor but he caught her before she could hit the ground.

'Well that was totally embarrassing.' She thought with sheer mortification.

She heard him chuckling deeply from behind her.
"Well that went better than I expected. But we'll have to work on controlling your thoughts and this." He squeezed her hips again causing her shudder uncontrollably. "But you did very well and I am impressed."

"Thanks." She squeaked, she was becoming entirely too uncomfortable at his closeness.

She expected him to let her go, but he didn't instead he started stroking the side of her hip with his right hand. Against her wishes, her body responded to the touch. Sweet hell almighty, what in the holy crap was he doing? Her brain was screaming at her to get him stop it before she did something that she would regret but the rest of her body refused to listen to her brain. She was sure that she was doing a total crap job of controlling her feelings but he was making it impossible to do anything about it. She felt his fingers toy with the hem of her top like they were going to disappear underneath it and a strangled noise caught in the back of her throat.

Suddenly, she heard the clearing of a throat come from the doorway and the moment, whatever it was, was gone. Her head swiveled toward the door way and it was like somebody went and poured a bucket of ice water over her entire body. There stood Christine with a look on her face that she couldn't even describe but it would be forever cemented in her brain. She had to get out of there as fast as she could. She sensed that Stephen had let her go and she took the opportunity to get the hell out of dodge before anybody could do or say anything about it.

As she exited the room, she could hear Stephen and Christine yelling at each other and she winced. This was all her fault. For some reason, Stephen had the ability to make her go stupid with just a small touch or a look and because she was so damn selfish especially when it came to him she did nothing about it when she should have. Because of that, she did exactly what she promised herself that she wouldn't do let everything go sideways because of it.

Making it to her room to record time, she thanked every deity above that the cloak didn't find her and try to stop her. That was really the last thing she needed at the moment. Entering her room quickly, she slid down into her desk chair and placed her head in her hands. She could not believe that actually happened. God, she didn't know what to even do with this situation.

Maybe she should call Darcy for advice? She quickly decided against that because she was pretty sure that there was nothing that Darcy could do to bail her out of this mess. That left her with Bucky and Steve for options and that was a huge hell no. They would try and murder Stephen and that wouldn't solve a thing. Her instincts told her to just leave and go back to the tower but for some reason something else was telling her not to do that. Maybe it was the magic of the building, she did not know.

What she did know was that she had to distract herself by doing something; she knew staying holed up in her room thinking about the mess she found herself in would do her no good. The necklace suddenly jumped to the forefront of her brain and she decided that now was a good a time as any to see if there was a book that would get her some information on it. Providing Wong was not in the library of course, because hell would have to freeze over before she told him any of what just happened to her.

She waited for a bit before gaining the courage to exit her room. As she snuck back down to the library, she also hoped that Stephen and Christine were long gone because if they weren't, this whole entire effort would be futile.

Thankfully, neither Wong nor Stephen or Christine were anywhere to be found, thank god for small miracles. Moving through the shelves, she came across a book that looked to be a sort of index on different types of relics. It would have to do for now, because she didn't want to stick around too long and get caught. Grabbing the heavy book, she left the library and snuck back up to her room.
She moved the other books on her desk and placed the large book down on it. She sat down at her desk and began to flip through the pages. It took her awhile but she found what she was looking for.

She came across what looked like a hand drawn photo of the necklace. She determined that the necklace was called the *Dragon's tear*. From what she was reading, it wasn't a normal relic that a normal sorcerer was able to wield. She couldn't help but wonder why in the hell it chose her to try and wield it. Did that mean she wasn't normal?

She continued to try and read until a weird shuffling outside her door interrupted her. She instinctively knew what it was. She opened the door and found the cloak levitating there but instead of coming into the room it wrapped itself around her wrist and tried to drag her out of the room. She knew it was trying to bring her to Stephen.

"Nooo, let go you silly cloak! I don't want to go to him!" She hissed.

The cloak didn't seem to care what she wanted though, it continued to drag her until it brought her to the foyer of the sanctum and then she could feel it. The most debilitating sadness that she ever felt, she could only be coming from one person and that person was Stephen. It was so bad that it almost brought her to her knees. The cloak let go of her and nudged at her until she gained the courage to enter the foyer. Honestly, she thought the cloak would hate her after everything that happened.

Entering the foyer, her heart broke at what she saw. Stephen was sitting on the couch with his head in his hands. This was all her fault! Why in the hell did she have to be so damn selfish when it came to him? She should have just left the situation and none of this would have happened.

Suddenly, she felt the strange presence again and heard the soft voice in her head. Was it getting stronger or was it just her?

*Poor little guardian, sometimes it matters not what we chose to do for the results will always remain the same.*

The voice and the presence disappeared as quickly as it came. She supposed the voice had a point but she still couldn't help feeling that she was mostly to blame for the situation. Quietly, she walked up to the couch and sat down next to Stephen. If he felt her presence, he didn't show it. She was reminded of herself the night they baked cookies together. She sighed and started biting at her lips. She didn't know if what she was about to suggest would help any but it was worth a try.

"Um Stephen, do you want me to leave? Will that help?" She asked softly.

She was not expecting the reaction she got to that question. His head shot up and he looked at her with alarm.

"NO!" He yelled loudly and then looked very sheepish for yelling so loudly. "I mean, no."

She looked at him kind of like 'I just messed up your entire life and you want me to stay, I don't get it' she waited for him to elaborate and he did.

"Oh sweet girl, please don't think any of this is your fault." He told her softly.

She was stunned at what he was saying.

"I was being a selfish idiot, I thought if I tried hard enough I could merge my old life with my new life and not have to give anything up but I was wrong to do so. Not only did I hurt Christine but I hurt you too and none of it is fair to either of you. Hell, even Wong tried to warn me that this might happen and I didn't listen. Now I've lost Christine and now I will probably lose you too." He laughed
bitterly.

She inwardly winced. So Christine probably wasn't coming back, even though he told her it wasn't fault she still felt like a giant asshole. But she could sense his fear, she knew that he was scared that she would leave and would never come back. His pride would never ever let him say that out loud but it was there. She sighed, her desire to leave was suddenly waning she couldn't leave him alone when he was like this.

"Okay Stephen, I'll stay." She murmured.

She could see the relief plain as day on his face and could feel it coming from him too. She felt him relax next and it caused her to relax too. She couldn't help but lean into him a little. Soon, she felt herself begin to drift off slowly. This entire day had been so crazy that it literally sucked the energy right out of her. No matter how she tried to fight it off and stay awake, it was useless and she ended up falling asleep where she sat.

Stephen

Watching his cloak levitate up to Irena's sleeping from, he wasn't surprised to see it try to wrap around her like a blanket. Irena only remained visible now from the nose up and he looked at the scene in front of him with affection. For some reason, he enjoyed watching the cloak interact with her like that and he didn't know why. Letting out a deep sigh, he shifted so Irena would be a little more comfortable.

He couldn't help but be glad that she decided to stay because he was so selfish.

Even though a lot of aspects of his personality had changed, that one always remained the same it was just part of who he was. He was selfish with certain members of the opposite sex, especially with Christine and now with Irena too. He didn't want to lose either of them and now he lost Christine he sure as hell wasn't going to lose Irena.

He told Irena the truth when he said he should have never tried to merge his old life with his new life. He knew he was asking for big trouble but he did it anyway and now he lived to regret it. If he had left well enough alone Christine would at least be talking to him still.

Thinking back to the incident in the practice room, he hadn't meant to push it so far but Irena had no idea of the allure she possessed and it wasn't just because of her magic it was because of her. It was something in the way she carried herself, her perpetually messy curly hair, her freckled face and mismatched eyes. Even her sometimes foul mouth didn't bother him because it was part of who she was. He was reminded a lot of what once drew him to Christine; there was not one thing he would change about Irena ever.

She came into his mostly perfect, ordered life and turned it completely sideways. He wouldn't have it any other way now. He watched with affection as she tried to pull the cloak up over her head and burrow further into him. He stroked the top of her head softly.

He couldn't imagine her not being at the Sanctum with him now. He was just too selfish to have it any other way.
To Be Surprised

Chapter Notes

Okay! So all of you may have noticed that I have edited this thing. I felt that it was too heavy in the swearing so I modified it. Here is a new chapter, I will probably put up two more since I have so much of it done already! Enjoy! Thanks again for all the Kudos(s) and everything else it is much appreciated!

Irena

Humming along to her music, Irena flipped through her newly acquired gossip rag magazine and lounged on a couch in what she called the 'living room' of the sanctum. She found it one day when she was exploring. It was comfortable and quiet, she what she needed after she psycho two days she just had. Reading gossip rags was a little bit of a dirty secret of hers, she knew they were stupid but they were a great way to blow off steam. She was so lost in her magazine that she didn't feel the presence that entered the room until it snatched the magazine right from under her.

Realizing what just happened, she looked up to see Stephen holding her magazine and looking at her with amusement.

"Hey, what in the hell was that for? Give that back you jerk!" She yelled indignantly.

He shook his head and held it out of her reach teasingly.

"Why are you reading this drivel? It'll melt you brain!" He teased.

"After the last two days I've had, I'm willing to sacrifice a couple of brain cells. Now give it back, damnit!" She whined.

Getting up from her position, she made an attempt to get her magazine back but the height difference made the effort fruitless. He continued to dangle it over her head with an infuriating smirk plastered on his handsome face. Oh that asshole, she was going to get her damn, shitting magazine back one way or another. Letting out a battle cry of frustration, she pounced onto him with force enough to knock him back onto the couch. She climbed up him like Super Mario trying to climb a freaking beanstalk. She sensed that he wasn't upset by it in the least in fact; it completely amused him which pissed her off more. She did, however, manage to snatch her magazine back.

She watched apprehensively as his amused grin turn into a look that was wreaking serious havoc on her insides. She was so intent on getting her magazine back that she hadn't paid any attention to the fact that she was now sitting on top of him. She felt an uncontrollable flush travel up her neck as he placed his hand on her lower back and pulled her closer to himself.

"Well if I had known that this was all it would take to get you on top of me, I would have done it a lot sooner." He purred cheekily.

At his words, she felt her flush grow ten-fold and she spluttered for a moment.

"I…what…oh, you, you JERK you!" She shrieked, swatting at him with her magazine.
She watched as he laughed outright at her lame ass attempt to insult him and she knew that it was bad by even her standards. She watched him open his mouth no doubt to tell her as much when suddenly something shifted. Suddenly Stephen's entire demeanour changed, he went from playful and annoyingly flirty to fiercely protective. Clearly something changed that her magic in the current state it was in was not strong enough to pick up. Gently, he shifted her from his lap to the couch and stood up. She looked at him questioningly.

"What…" She started but was cut off by Stephen.

"There is somebody in the Sanctum, stay here." He ordered.

"But…" She protested but was again cut off by Stephen.

"I said stay here!" He growled.

She flinched at the tone of his voice, not use it sounding the way it did. She knew he was just trying to keep her safe though. As if sensing all her messed up emotions, his blue eyes softened considerably and he stroked the top of her head.

"Please." He amended in a softer tone.

She nodded wordlessly and he stepped away from her. She watched him call for his cloak and leave the room.

Momentarily, she sat on the couch completely stunned before shaking it off. There was no way in HELL that she was staying put. To hell with that! Throwing her magazine on the couch, she left the room and tip toed to the foyer. After way there, she started being able to sense what Stephen had been sensing. Somebody WAS in the Sanctum, but it felt sort of familiar like she knew the person. Getting closer to the foyer, she realized that she DID know who the person was. Entering the foyer, her eyes bulged in shock at the sight in front of her. Stephen had Bucky pinned to the wall using the crimson bands of Cyttorak. She could sense that Bucky was hurt, not from Stephen but by something that happened before he came to the Sanctum. She had to stop Stephen now.

"Stephen, stop!" She exclaimed.

Her shout was enough to distract him effectively ending the spell and releasing Bucky. He turned to her looking pissed off.

"I thought I told you to stay put!" He yelled.

She fought the urge to roll her eyes. She had to remind herself that He probably didn't know anything about Bucky living at the tower and probably thought he was still an enemy.

"Stephen, relax. Bucky is not an enemy I promise." She said, trying to placate him.

Thankfully, it seemed to work, mostly. He was still very tense but she didn't think that he would attack again. She moved to go and help Bucky but was stopped by Stephen. She turned back around and he looked at her imploringly.

"But he was the winter soldier." He said, she could sense the distrust coming from him.

Hearing that name, she cringed. She hated that stupid name and she could tell Bucky did too.

"He isn't that person anymore, I swear." She tried to reassure him.
"Stephen, please." She intoned softly, eyes begging.

Finally, she felt Stephen relax more and release her. She ran up to Bucky and led him over to the couch so she could check him over. Lifting up his black tank top, she very quickly found where the injury was. A lovely looking burn on his lower abdomen. Looking at his metal arm, she saw that it was crudely wrapped up with...something. Unwrapping whatever it was that he had wrapped around his metal arm, she was shocked to see a giant gaping hole in it with all kinds of wires and circus sticking out where they weren't supposed to be. Poking around, she wondered how the hell he managed to mess up his arm so bad. Deep down, she kind of had an idea of what happened.

Sighing, she decided the best way to go about fixing this situation would be to give Bucky some relief from his burn first. Super solider serum or not, that had to hurt like hell. Getting up from her crouched position in front of the couch, she turned back to face Stephen who looked really kind of jealous. She inwardly snorted, if he only knew he had nothing to worry about at all.

"Stephen, you wouldn't happen to have something for burns would you?" She asked.

She watched Stephen momentarily hesitate and then he nodded, She suspected that his Doctor instincts kicked in and won out over the jealousy.

'Thank god this not the time for you to go all Doctor douche-noodle on me, Stephen.' She thought.

She could tell he read her thoughts because he was looking at her with a look that said 'Doctor douche-noodle, seriously?' She merely inwardly shrugged right back at him.

"Yes I believe I do, let me go retrieve it and I will return shortly." He replied, leaving the room.

She knew how he used to be and just didn't need or want that right now. Sighing, she returned to trying to sort out the mess that was Bucky's arm. Looking up momentarily, she saw that Bucky had a look on his face that told her that he was about to say something that would more than likely piss her right off.

"So, I think your boyfriend hates me." He joked.

Immediately, she could feel an uncontrollable blush heat up her cheeks. She didn't think she was being THAT obvious but clearly she was.

"He is so NOT my boyfriend!" She denied vehemently.

"ANYWAY, do you mind telling me what you did to piss off Tony so bad? I mean I know I told you to come visit me but this is ridiculous." She continued changing the subject quickly.

Bucky chuckled knowingly at her question and her quick change of subject.

"Can't get much passed you, can I? I really didn't want the queen of the twats anywhere near my arm. So I gathered some of your shit and came here." He explained.

She gathered quickly that 'the queen of the twats' was the new mechanic Tony hired to replace her while she was gone.

'Wow, was it really THAT bad?' She wondered.

As much as she wanted to think that it was, it probably wasn't. That was just 'Bucky' for I don't trust that bitch anywhere near my arm so I came here so you could fix it. She knew that Bucky still had problems with trust and probably always would. It wasn't his fault.
"So, Tony caught you didn't he?" She guessed.

Bucky nodded.

"Yeah he did, but his aim is total shit when he's pissed." He said.

"Thank god for that, tell me how did he manage to catch a master assassin like yourself?" She asked curiously.

Bucky gave her the stink eye at that question.

"Hey it wasn't my fault! My arm was making so much fucking noise everybody probably heard me!" He protested.

"So something was wrong with it before Tony blew a hole in it?" She gathered.

"Yeah, I don't know what I did, must have fucked it up training." He shrugged.

"Fair enough, let me go see what goodies you brought me and I'll see what I can do." She said, getting up from the floor.

She walked over to the black bag Bucky discarded when Stephen attacked him. Opening it up, she saw all kinds of tools that she could use to fix his arm. She was a little shocked that he knew which tools to grab in the first place. She was so happy to have some of her tools back, that she started doing quite the cheesy happy dance. She knew she probably looked like such a tool but she just couldn't bring herself to care.

"Yay, tools!" She exclaimed in happiness.

She heard Bucky snort in amusement and she also sensed that Stephen had come back into the room. He was carrying a small pot of salve in his right hand and was also looking at her with amusement. She watched him toss the pot of salve to Bucky.

"Here, that'll help with the burn. I concocted it myself so it would work well." He explained.

Bucky nodded his thanks to Stephen and applied some of the salve to his burn. She could sense that it did make him feel better. Bucky threw the pot of salve back to Stephen and he pocketed it. She was happy to sense that Stephen seemed a lot less grumpy and jealous about this whole situation now. When Bucky first came to the tower, he refused to let anybody get near him except for her for some reason. Not even Steve could get close to him for a long time which she could tell kind of pissed him off a little bit. It pissed off Tony a whole lot too but she couldn't leave him to suffer so she helped him every step of the way however she could. Over time, she formed a bond with him that was completely platonic like he was her bother in every way but blood. Thinking of him in any other way was just plain freaking nasty. Since Stephen could pick up on emotions like she could, she gathered that he figured that out. She could still feel hints of possessiveness but most of it was gone thank god.

She was really thankful for that because she didn't quiet think she was ready to explain the whole thing to Stephen just yet. That was a lot of emotional baggage to go through.

She picked up the black bag of tools and gestured for Bucky to get off of the couch and he complied. She so did NOT want to be reasonable for wrecking anything in Stephen's foyer so she thought the 'practice room' would be the best bet to fix Bucky's arm. She turned to Stephen and gave him a curious look.
"Would you be willing to be my assistant? I am going to need help fixing Bucky's arm." She explained.

She watched as Stephen thought for a moment and then he nodded.

"I think that I can do that." He said.

She gave him an incredibly grateful look. She knew that she was asking a lot of him.

"Thank you so much. I really I appreciated it." She said gratefully.

She knew with him helping her it would take half the time it normally would if she were doing it alone. She and Stephen led Bucky to the 'practice room' and she told Bucky to take a seat in the chair that was next to the table. She dumped the bag of tools onto the table and sorted through them while Stephen went to retrieve another chair from the library. Looking down at her AC/DC shirt, skinny jeans and mismatched socks, she let out a sigh. She kind of wished she had a pair of overalls in case she wrecked her shirt but there wasn't much she could do about it. After organizing her tools, she started poking around Bucky's arm. She couldn't believe the mess that it was. Stupid Tony really did a number on it. Stephen returned with the chair and she looked at him gratefully. She sat down and got to work.

"So, how's the magic training going?" Bucky asked, breaking the silence.

She was so shocked at the sudden interruption of silence, that she accidentally shocked herself with a couple of loose wires in Bucky's arm.

"Ouch!" She yelped.

She looked at Bucky with her lips pursed in mock irritation.

"Thanks for scaring the crap out of me you jerk. It's going pretty good! I can control it now at least." She replied.

Bucky looked at her sheepishly.

"Sorry and that's good news." He said.

She just inwardly rolled her mismatched eyes and got back to work. Slowly, she began to reconnect all of the disconnected wires and put everything back in its place. Every time she needed a different tool, Stephen would switch it out for her. She could sense that he was becoming interested in what she was doing.

"Hmm, this is just like performing a surgery." He commented with interest.

"Yes, yes it is." She agreed with a knowing smile on her face.

She could tell she had him hooked how. Hopefully, she could ask him to let her do it again if Bucky ever needed it. After a good two hours, she had everything back in place, but there was still the issue of covering the giant, gaping hole that was left. Looking around, she saw a piece of she didn't even know what the hell it was that Bucky must have tossed in the bag with all of the tools. It would have to do. Grabbing her goggles, she put them on and worked on soldering the piece of hodge-podge metal over the hole on Bucky's arm. It didn't look pretty but it did the job.

"How's that work for you?" She asked curiously
Bucky moved his arm experimentally and gave her a winning smirk.

"It's perfect, doll face." He grinned.

She could sense Stephen's possessiveness spike at Bucky's endearment. She inwardly shook her head. Oh Stephen.

"Excellent." She said, happy her skills hadn't gotten rusty over time.

She turned to Stephen and looked at him apprehensively. She seriously hoped she could appeal to surgeon inside of him.

"Um Stephen, could Bucky come back here go get his arm repaired again if he needs to?" She asked apprehensively.

She watched Stephen think for a moment and then he nodded.

"Sure, I think that would be okay. I would like to learn more about how you do it anyway." He replied.

She inwardly let out a breath of relief. Thank god. That worked better than she thought it would. Bucky had so many issues with trust that he would probably sooner walk around with his arm messed up than letting that other mechanic try to fix it. This way, she knew it was getting fixed right. Plus Stephen got a taste of performing surgery which she knew he sorely missed it was a fair trade for teaching her how to control her magic.

She put away all of her tools and sung the black bag over her shoulder. She, Stephen and Bucky walked back to the foyer in a comfortable silence. Just as she was about to bid Bucky goodbye, he spoke first.

"So Strange, do you like my sister?" He asked curiously.

Both she and Stephen looked at Bucky with shock at the question.

"Excuse me?" Stephen choked.

"You heard me Strange, do you like my sister?" Bucky asked again.

Realizing what was happening, she instantly turned a ridiculous shade of purple. She was not sticking around to listen to Bucky give Stephen the big brother talk. Could Bucky be any more embarrassing? She needed to get the hell out now.

"Well, this is where I take my leave. Goodbye Bucky, don't hesitate to come back if you need you need your arm fixed, I am so not listening to this and I am so out of here!" She said hastily.

She backpedaled out of the foyer as fast as she could. She even plugged her ears for good measure. Satisfied that she was out of hearing range, she un-plugged her ears and headed for her bed room. Entering her bedroom, her mismatched eyes instantly went to the big book sitting on her desk and she sighed. She supposed now was as good as a time as any to finish reading up on that necklace.

She now knew that it was called the Dragon's Tear and that it wasn't a normal relic but not much else.

Discarding the bag of tools, she went and sat down at her desk. She flipped open the book and found the page with the drawing of the necklace on it. She continued to read.
Dragon's Tear: The Dragon's tear is a relic that has been specifically designed to be wielded by a Guardian. The power that it contains is too great for any normal sorcerer to wield. It amplifies the magic of its wearer and allows the wearer to shape-shift into a dragon. Should any normal sorcerer try to wield the Dragon's Tear, consequences would be disastrous.

So that left her with more questions than answers. What in the hell was a Guardian and why was this relic calling to her to try and wield it? Did that mean that she wasn't human?

She continued to read but found no more information on Guardians in this book. She knew that would probably have to switch them out to find out more. Damn, well, didn't this make her feel like more of a freak than she already was. Sighing, she closed the book and crawled into bed. She decided that she needed some sleep before she did that. She wondered if she should tell Stephen what was happening to her or not. She decided that for now she would just research on her own. If she needed Stephen's help, she would tell him. She was so confused that she would rather try to figure it out on her own first.

Letting out another soft sigh, she let her mismatched eyes drift shut. There was no sense in worrying about it now. Sleep was way more important at the moment.

Memory/Dream

A small child no old her than 4 years of age stood in small living room staring at glass strewn all over the wooden floor at her chubby little feet. Her mismatched eyes of blue and green stared at the glass in shock not realizing what just happened. Her mother entered the small living room and let out a long sigh.

"Oh sweetness what happened this time?" She asked softly.

"Don't know mama, glass just 'sploded." The little girl said.

Before the mother could reply, the father entered the living room looking angry.

"What did I tell you about doing this?!!" The father yelled.

The little girl flinched at her father's angry voice.

"Sorry papa didn't mean to." The little girl mumbled.

The father let out an angry growl and grabbed the arm of the little girl roughly.

"I don't care that you didn't mean to do it, I said no magic bullshit in this household!" The father snarled.

The little girl trembled with fear. Before the father could lay a hand on her, the mother grabbed her and ran. The mother ran out of the house and reached the center of the tiny village that they lived in as fast as she could. Placing the little girl on her feet, she looked at her lovingly and stroked her soft head.

"Daughter, you must listen to me. You must run until you find the big wooden magical door do you understand me? Do not stop running until you find that door do you understand?" The mother explained.

The 4 year old little girl nodded sadly and rubbed her runny nose on her sleeve. The mother gave her one last kiss on the head.
"Good, now go!" The mother urged.

The little girl ran as fast as her chubby little legs could carry her. She finally found the big magic wooden door. She pounded her tiny little fists on the door as loud as she could. They had to let her in before her papa found her.

"Let me in please!" She shrieked.

The door swung open and the little girl crawled in.

"Hush little child, you are safe now." A familiar voice murmured.

*End of Memory/Dream*

Suddenly, Irena's mismatched eyes snapped open and she sat up ram-rod straight. She was sweating profusely and struggled to catch her breath.

Just what in the HELL was that!?
Irena could not get that weird dream or memory or whatever the hell it was out of her head no matter what she tried. Before now, she had never really given her past any thought. She just kind of figured that parents couldn't care for her so they thought she would be better off if they gave her up. She never ever thought that she had ever been anywhere besides New York. But if that dream was anything to go by, she had been elsewhere. That 'magical wooden door' seemed familiar. So did the little village too. Thinking back to Wong telling her stories of Kamar-Taj, alarm bells went off inside of her head. She couldn't have been there at some point in her life could she have? That would be totally insane wouldn't it?

She shook her head; all of this thinking was giving her a giant king sized headache. She decided that she had to do something to take her mind off of it. Changing into her work out clothes, she decided to see if Stephen would spar with her. If not, she would practice summoning her magic some more. Exiting her room, she ambled down the hallway and stopped in the room of relics that held the necklace. Entering the room, she approached the glass case that held the Dragon's Tear. Looking at the necklace, she could feel its pull, getting even closer she began to notice something weird. She could actually hear it trying to talk to her but it was all gibberish though. She wondered if Stephen's cloak did that too.

Shaking her head, she left the room and made her way down the practice room. She could sense that Stephen was in his study and she really didn't want to interrupt him while he was in there in case he was meditating or something so practicing her magic it was. Walking up to the table and chair that sat in the room, she hopped up on the table and sat down on it. She began to practice her magic. She continuously summoned and dismissed her magic. Now that she had the hang of that, she wanted to try something a little different. Concentrating really hard, she tried to change the shape of the crackling blue energy in her hand. It took a few tries but eventually she got it to work. First she tried a small blue kitten, which she managed to get to walk around on her palm. Then she tried a blue butterfly, she made like she was going to blow somebody a kiss and blew on it lightly. She watched it flutter toward the door way with a small smile on her face.

Stephen appeared in the door way suddenly and looked at the blue butterfly fluttering around with an impressed look on his face.

"Hey." She said, smiling softly.

"Hey yourself, that was pretty impressive! Are you up for trying something a little more difficult?" He asked curiously.

She chewed on her lips in apprehension. Every time he said those words something always went sideways but her curiosity eventually overrode her apprehension.

"Sure, what did you have in mind?" She replied.
"I want you to try summoning a weapon with your magic. You have good enough control that you should be able to do that now. I will demonstrate." He explained.

She watched with fascination as he placed his palms together like he was praying and pulled them apart slowly. She was shocked to see that an orange blade began to materialize between his hands. After he finished summoning the weapon, he began to show off with it causing her to snicker a little bit. He dismissed the blade and gestured for her to give it a try.

"Alright, now it's your turn." He said.

She mimicked his movements but nothing happened. She tried over and over again but it seemed to do shit all. She didn't understand what the problem was. Minutes ago, her magic was working fine now nothing was happening at all. Like what the hell? She was beginning to get frustrated and she could sense that Stephen was getting frustrated with her lack of progress too.

"Come on, Irena! I know you can do better than this! Summon something!" He growled in frustration.

She glared angrily at him.

"I AM trying you jackass!" She yelled loudly.

"Well try harder!" He yelled back just as loudly.

Concentrating as hard as she could, she finally felt her magic crackle to life and a blue fan materialized in each of her hands. Failing to notice the look of extreme shock on Stephen's face, she examined the fans she held in each hand. They looked as intricate and beautiful as they did deadly. She began to move them experimentally until she noticed the extremely disturbed look on Stephen's face and dismissed them quickly.

"Did I do something wrong?" She asked worriedly.

She watched as the shock melted away from his features and was replaced with a look of reassurance.

"No not at all, I have only ever seen one other person summon such weapons before. I was just shocked you were able to do it is all." He explained.

"Oh gee thanks." She said in mock exasperation.

She expected him to give her an amused smirk at that remark but instead he was looking at her in a way that melted her insides. Not being able to hold his gaze any longer, she blushed deeply and looked away. Tenderly, he made her meet his gaze by placing two fingers underneath her chin stroking along her jawline as he did so. The unexpected touch turned her veins into liquid fire. Not knowing exactly what to do, she remained frozen in place.

"You are amazing." He intoned softly.

Her eyes widened at that compliment. It wasn't like she had never received a compliment in her life before, she knew that she was loved and cared about by a lot of people. But this was on a whole other level. The level of sincerity in the compliment was enough to make her entire core tremble. This was something that she never felt before in her life ever but she liked it a lot.

"I…thank you." She murmured sincerely.
He smiled at her warmly and gave her flushed cheek one last tender stroke. She could sense that he was enjoying what his touch did to her and that made her even more flustered. While she did have some experience in dealing with the opposite sex it had been a ridiculously shitty experience and nothing like this at all. At the rate this was going, she was going to jump right out of her own freaking skin. As if sensing this, he began to slowly pull away. She couldn't tell whether it was helping or making it worse. She sensed that his emotions had turned from intense to light and teasing. She watched him stand back and admire his handy work, which caused her to stick her tongue out at him.

"You are a terrible person." She mock deadpanned.

He gave her a mock angry glare and pretended to tsk at her.

"And after I just told you that you were amazing! Well I never!" He said, pretending to be angry.

She held back a snort of laughter at the display he made but kept the game going.

"Well, to hell with this! I am just going to leave here and go back to my room then! Goodbye!" She said in an exaggerated whiney voice.

She even blew him a raspberry for good measure. She made to turn around like she was going to leave the room but was stopped before she even fully got to turn around. He placed his large hands on her shoulders and whirled her back around so she was facing him. He let his hands slide down her arms until he was cupping her hands in his. His hands dwarfed hers in comparison.

"I think I would rather see these cute little hands summon those fans again." He purred.

Immediately, all of the tension and heat that left her body previously came roaring back. She let out an undignified squeak at what he just said. She could sense that he knew exactly what he was doing and liked it.

'Oh what a freaking tease!' She thought to herself.

"U-um, okay." She stuttered a little.

She watched the shit-eating smirk return full-force knowing that she was stuttering because he was making her all flustered all over again. Sending him a look of pure exasperation, she backed away from him so she could think properly again. Concentrating hard, she managed to summon the fans once more. She determined quickly that the more relaxed she was, the easier it was to summon her magic.

She continued to summon and dismiss the fans until she began to feel fatigue. Stephen stopped her gently.

"You are beginning to feel fatigue you should stop." He advised.

Knowing he was right, she stopped the last thing she needed was to pass out again. She fought back a yawn and rubbed the heel of her palm against her left eye. She could sense that Stephen was watching her intently.

"Come on, I'll walk you back to your room." He offered.

She wanted to protest but she knew that he wouldn't take no for an answer. Instead, she nodded in agreement.
"Okay." She said, trying to hold back a yawn.

She let Stephen place his large hand on her lower back and lead her out of the room. She and Stephen walked through the Sanctum in a companionable silence. As Stephen led her through the room where all the relics were kept, she instantly began to feel the pull of the necklace and she involuntarily stopped. Stephen sent her a questioning glance.

"Are you alright?" He questioned.

Shaking out her trance, she nodded.

"Sorry, I must be more tried than I thought." She replied.

She could sense that Stephen didn't completely buy her answer but he seemed to let it go for now, thankfully. He nudged her gently and she started walking again. He led her the rest of the way to her room and she looked at him gratefully. With her terrible luck, she would have ended up passed out somewhere.

"Thank you." She murmured tiredly.

He looked at her tenderly and stroked the top her head softly.

"You are welcome, my sweet girl. Now go sleep." He said.

She nodded tiredly. She have him one last parting smile and entered her room. Looking around her room, the decided that as soon as she woke up that she would have to tidy it up and get a load of laundry done. But for now, she needed sleep. Getting on some comfortable clothes, she climbed into bed and got comfortable. As she started drifting off, thoughts of Stephen ran through her mind. She couldn't believe how he managed to get under her skin with a single well placed touch and how much she liked it. She had never ever felt anything so intense for a guy before in all her life. She didn't think she could have it any other way now. With that final thought in her mind, she let herself drift off into a deep sleep.

Stephen

Stephen couldn't believe what had transpired in the last three or so days. He also couldn't believe how fast the relationship between Irena and himself was changing. He couldn't say that he didn't enjoy it because he did. But he had never experienced something quite so intense before. With Christine things had never been quite like this, but he suspected it had something to do with the magic they shared between them amplifying everything. He so enjoyed feeling how flustered she got at his touch, how shy she was at times and how she accepted all of him completely scars and all. He knew that she spoiled him completely and he liked it immensely.

His thoughts drifted to Irena's behavior in the relic room. He knew that she was hiding something from him but he decided the best course of action would be to let her come to him instead of going to her. Irena was like a little puzzle, HIS little puzzle and he didn't want to solve her all at once. Not when there was still so much more to learn about her. Another errant thought crossed his mind, the possessiveness he felt for her was nothing he ever experienced either. When Barnes came to get his arm repaired, there were several times he had to keep his possessiveness in check even after he realized Barnes was not a threat. He didn't know why that was. There was just something about Irena the drove his instincts into overdrive. Which clearly Barnes sensed, he was just lucky Barnes accepted his wish to pursue a relationship with Irena because that was one less person who would try to kill him for doing it. He could only imagine what Tony would try to do.
Shaking out of his thoughts, he decided he was well overdue for a meditation session. He walked to his study calling for his cloak as he did so. Entering his study, he prepared himself for meditation. He went to the center of the room and levitated off of the floor. He crossed his legs and let his eyes drift closed. Just as he went into a relaxed state, something shifted and his eyes popped open. He was shocked to see that he was no longer in his study but in some place that he had no idea where or what it was. There was just never ending grass, blue sky and not much else. He looked around apprehensively.

"What even is this place?" He wondered to himself.

"Finally, I thought you were never going to meditate and I would have to wait forever. Not that it would be much of a problem." A familiar voice said.

He whirled around only to come face to face with the Ancient One. He fought against the urge to choke in shock. How was this even possible? She smiled at him serenely.

"Don't look so shocked, Master Strange. You practice the Mystic Arts after all." The Ancient One laughed.

He opened and closed his mouth a few times before he got his words working again. He was too shocked to even remind her of his proper title.

"How..." He started.

"How am I talking to you?" She finished for him.

"I merely separated your soul from your body for a bit but you had to be in a completely relaxed state for me to do it. That is why I waited for you to begin your meditation because it would be very painful and unfortunate otherwise. This place, in case you were wondering, is essentially limbo, the place between life and death. Don't worry, I promise everything will be as it was once I am done talking to you." She explained.

"You gained an apprentice did you not?" She asked curiously.

He looked at her like he didn't even know what to say but he nodded.

"Yes, how did you know?" He asked.

She merely gave him a knowing look and the gears in his minds started turning.

"Did you, you didn't know her at some point did you?" He asked incredulously.

"Very good Master Strange, you are as smart as I knew you to be." She praised.

He ignored the blatant disregard for his given title because now his curiosity was starting to get the better of him. How on god's green did she know Irena? He had to know now.

"How did you know her?" He asked curiously.

She smiled at him softly.

"When Irena was very young, her parents came to Kamar-Taj looking for answers like you once did. Children of her age should not be exhibiting signs of magic but she was. Unfortunately, her father didn't take kindly to anything I had to say and unfortunately I couldn't force him to let Irena and her mother stay. So they left. Months later, I found Irena all alone on my door step and took her in." She
explained.

"Unfortunately, not everybody is receptive to the idea of magic. Especially the magnitude of the magic Irena possesses. You have heard of the Guardians have you not?" She asked curiously.

He thought hard for a moment. He did hear of the term in passing but from what he heard of it, they were just a myth.

"I thought they were a myth." He said.

She shook her head.

"Don't believe everything you hear or read for that matter. I believe that Irena the descendant of one. She is showing all the signs and if that is the case she needs to be with somebody who won't seek to use her powers for their own gain. I couldn't leave her surrounded by all kinds of sorcerers that would seek to do just that." She explained.

"So you sent her away." He finished.

He could see the sadness in her eyes. That was probably one of the hardest thing that she ever had to do as the Ancient One.

"Yes, I did. I did it myself. This was something I could not even leave to Mordo to do." She said.

His blue eyes widened at that but he though he knew why.

"You sensed darkness in Mordo's heart, didn't you?" He gathered.

She nodded.

"I knew that I could not trust him with the task. I have another task that I KNOW I can trust you with. You are one of a kind, Master Strange. You have no darkness in your heart and you are the only one I have sensed to be this way. This is why I am tasking you to keep looking after her and protect her from those that seek to harm her. Can you do that?" She asked seriously.

He nodded.

"Of course I will." He said automatically.

She smiled knowingly.

"You are in love with her." She said knowingly.

His eyes widened and he began to choke. How in god's name had she figured that out? He hadn't even figured that out for himself yet!

"Don't act so shocked. You wear your heart on your sleeve when it comes to her and you shouldn't be ashamed about it. Love in itself is a very powerful magic, perhaps the most powerful there is and you should use it wisely. Please take care of her and keep her safe. Do what I and her mother could not." She pleaded.

"You have my word." He said, bowing slightly.

"Good, I am afraid that we have run out of time and it's time for you to go back now." She stated.

Before he could even ponder what that entailed, she gave him a good hard shove and then it felt like
he was falling. Suddenly, he was back in his study sprawled out on the floor and his cloak was nowhere to be found. He pulled himself up in a sitting position and looked around his study. He couldn't even process what just happened even though he knew it happened. That was a lot of information to take in but when he gave his word he meant it and he knew that he would do anything for Irena.

Sighing, he went to his room so he could try and sleep. He needed to that before he could do anything else. Changing into something more comfortable, he crawled into bed and tried to turn his mind off.

**Hours Later**

Stephen's blue eyes snapped open. It took him no time at all to figure out what woke him up so suddenly. He could sense major distress coming from Irena. Getting up from his bed, he exited the room and walked to Irena's room. He cracked open the door to see what the problem was and no prepared for the sight in front of him. She was clearly having some kind of nightmare, somethings were shaking and others were floating in the air. It was reminiscent of what happened to him when he had a nightmare.

Approaching the bed, he had to suck in a breath at what he saw. Irena was curled into a fetal position and her wild hair was splayed everywhere. He could see that she was clammy and that she tried to kick the sheets off unsuccessfully. He could also that her tank top had ridden up and he could see the scars on her back. He could sense that she needed comfort badly. Sitting on the side of the bed, he stroked back her sweaty hair.

"Stephen." She mumbled.

He momentarily stopped breathing, how did she know he was here?

"Stephen why are you here?" She slurred sleepily.

He determined that she was some place between sleep and awake.

"I am here because you are having a bad dream. What are you dreaming about?" He asked.

"Pain, can you stay with me?" She mumbled.

His eyed widened comically. He was not expecting any of that but he knew that he couldn't deny her.

"Alright." He agreed.

He lied down next to her carefully and she wasted no time in wrapping herself around him. He could feel her shaking and he tightened his arms around her.

"Shhh." He cooed.

He could sense her calming down and he breathed a sigh of relief. He was not shocked to see his cloak slink into the room. It levitated up to Irena and tried to wrap around her and bring her comfort too. Finally, she drifted back of into what he could tell was a dreamless sleep. It took him no time at all to join her. For the first time in so long, he slept comfortably throughout the entire night.
Irena

Stirring awake, Irena groaned miserably and tried to blink the morning light out of her tired eyes. She could not believe the horrendous dream that she had. She couldn't remember much in the way of details but she knew that it was very sad and painful. She knew that it had to be some kind of memory, because it was just real to be anything else. She had been with somebody that had been important to her and they left her somewhere. She didn't want to be left there and they didn't seem to care. The images and the situation weren't the problem so much. It was the emotions. The pain and anguish she felt at being left behind in the dream were enough to make her sick. The person who left her behind, whoever they were must have been really important to her at that time.

Gaining the rest of her bearings, she realized that Stephen's cloak was wrapped around her and wondered how in the hell that was even possible when she swore that she shut her door before she went bed. Moving around a little more, she let out an undignified squeak when a familiar arm suddenly pulled her flush up against a very familiar chest. Oh sweet Jesus Christ on freaking cracker, sometime during the night Stephen must have felt her painful emotions and came into the bedroom to see what the matter was. So how did he end up in bed with her?

She thought really hard. She remembered the shitty dream, and she vaguely remembered being stuck between being awake and being asleep for a while. She did remember sensing that Stephen was in the room with her but she thought she dreamt all of that. She remembered asking him what he was doing in her room and him asking what the dream was about. As she tried to recall what she told him, her mismatched eyes widened in shock. She told him that she was dreaming about pain, which was true, and then asked him to stay with her. Oh, how she wanted to die of embarrassment. She couldn't even believe she did that and he actually complied with her request. The worst part of the whole thing was that she liked being wrapped up in him, like really liked it. She felt warm, safe and comfortable.

Suddenly, she was ripped from her thoughts when Stephen let out a low, deep growl from behind her and nuzzled his face into her neck. She felt him press his lips to her pulse point on her neck and she held back a strangled noise. Her insides turned molten and she felt that she would spontaneously combust at any moment but she didn't want him to stop either. Finally gaining the courage to turn in his embrace, she sucked in a breath at just how intensely he was staring at her. His stormy blue eyes had darkened considerably and she could feel his desire. It intensified her emotions tenfold.

He nudged her gently so she was on top of him. She could sense that he really liked it when she was on top of him. She could feel him toying with the hem of her tank top and she was immediately reminded of their sparring match. Only this time there was no interruption and he did let his hands wander underneath her tank top. His hands were large, warm and they felt so very, very good. She let out a soft sigh and that caused him to let out another low growl. He nudged her even closer to himself. Suddenly, she could feel EVERYTHING. Her mismatched eyes widened comically and her mouth formed an 'o' shape. She could feel herself blushing magenta up to her hairline. Sweet
freaking hell almighty. Thinking of her previous experience being in this position, she froze completely. She hadn't expected things to move this fast and now she didn't know what to do. She felt horrible.

She could tell that Stephen seemed to sense this. She could sense that his concern for her was now overriding his desire for her at the moment. Quickly, he shifted his position so he was sitting up and leaning against the headboard of her bed. She curled into his lap seeking his comfort which he gave her readily. His cloak also re-wrapped itself around her.

"I am so so sorry." She murmured.

She could feel him sighing softly.

"Oh my sweet, sweet girl, I should be the one apologizing to you. I let myself get too lost in the moment and pushed you too far too fast. If you need to go slow, we will go slowly." He reassured her.

"Mmm, thank you." She said, rubbing her head against his chest.

She and Stephen lounged in a comfortable silence for a bit until she could sense that he wanted to question her about why she froze so badly earlier.

"Irena, were you…have you had issues in a previous relationship?" He asked, clearly he was trying to find the best way to word the question.

She chewed at her lips, thinking of the best way to answer him so he didn't blow a gasket.

"Um, you are going to think I am so stupid but when I was 17, a boy named Toby that used to bully me all the time at the orphanage came looking for me. He told me he wanted to apologize to me for treating me like shit all those years ago. We got to know each other and one thing led to another and we started going out. It was okay in the beginning, but then he started pushing for…that and I didn't want to. I tried to break up with him and he freaked out. Tony literally had to almost blow his head right off his shoulders before he took the damn hint. A couple of years later he tried to get back together but I said no and he wouldn't leave until Darcy finally punched him in the face." She explained.

The whole entire best part of that sordid messed up P.O.S relationship was when Darcy sucker punched Toby in the face because he refused to leave. Honestly, if she hadn't been so young and stupid at the time he came to her, she would have told him to get bent herself. He had been trouble with a capital T from day one at the orphanage. She couldn't even talk about any of that…stuff without getting all worked up now because of him.

She could sense that Stephen was very tense throughout her entire explanation; she could also sense his anger at the situation too. She tried to calm him down by rubbing his shaking hands in her small ones and it seemed to work. She knew that he hated hearing about crappy things that happened to her.

"I am so sorry you had to endure that but I promise you I will make it better for you." He promised.

Hearing him say that helped her feel better immensely.

"Oh, you are so good to me." She mumbled nuzzling into his chest again.

"Why, of course I am." He agreed.
Pulling back from him slightly, she looked at him with exasperation. "You are such an egotistical maniac." She commented, slapping at his chest.

"Yes, and you love it." He said cheekily.

Rolling her eyes at him, she grabbed the pillow nearest to her and threw it at him. It hit its mark and got him right in the face. She couldn't help but laugh out loud at the stunned look on his face.

"HA! Suck on that!" She laughed.

She watched him recover from the shock quickly and he tried to make a grab for her. However before he could, his cloak wrapped around him and yanked him back. It gave her the chance to hop off of the bed and out of his reach.

The entire thing was so absurd she couldn't help but laugh. Stephen looked at the cloak completely outraged.

"You're a traitor!" He yelled to the cloak.

Now she was just plain dying, she couldn't even believe the cloak just did that. She just could not stop laughing. She watched as he detangled himself from his cloak with some effort, he gave it a glare and shooed it away.

"Alright enough of that, I want you to get cleaned up and come to my study. I have something for you." He said, piquing her interest.

"What is it?" She asked curiously.

Letting out a chuckle, he shook his head at her.

"Come to my study and I'll show you." He laughed.

She pouted at him but nodded.

"Okay, fine." She mock whined.

"Good girl." He said smiling.

"Now, come here." He added, opening his arms to her.

She complied immediately and went into his open arms. He wrapped his arms around her and placed a tender kiss on her temple. She let out a happy sigh. Too soon, he pulled away and called his cloak to himself. He gave her one last warm, winning smile before exiting her room presumably to get himself cleaned up and put together too.

Momentarily, she stood there stunned a little stupid at the events that just transpired but she got over it quickly. Rubbing the side of her head, she headed for the shower hopping it would help her sort her thoughts out. Picking out some clothes to put on after her shower, she entered the bathroom. Getting rid of her night clothes, she entered the shower and began cleaning herself up. While she shampooed her crazy head of hair, her thoughts began to wander a little bit. She couldn't believe how good Stephen made her feel or how much she liked it. If this is what love felt like she never wanted it to stop. She thought back to what happened earlier this morning and she felt herself heat up a little bit.

'Okay, so maybe a little too good.' She thought to herself.
She sighed. Stephen was everything Toby wasn't and that scared her a lot. She couldn't imagine not being around him all of the time. Just how in the crap would she ever be able to leave the Sanctum and go back to the tower now? The very thought made her feel ill. Deciding not to think about that any longer, she finished her shower and hopped out. After she toweled herself off, she got dressed in her usual concert tee shirt and skinny jeans ensemble. This time she chose a shirt with *The Tragically Hip* on it. Exiting the bathroom, she picked up her brush that was sitting on her desk that was full of books and fixed up her hair. She decided to just leave it down today. As she went to go search out some socks, she heard her phone beep indicating that she had a text.

Plucking it off the night table next to the bed, she opened it and determined the text came from Darcy. Reading the text, she let out an amused snort.

For the love of god girlie, answer this text ASAP! I need to get the HELL out of this tower before I kill Jane. I don't care what we do I just need to get out before I lose my freaking mind! – D

Wow, she wondered just what in the hell Jane did that was so bad. She typed an answer back quickly.

Jesus girl, what in the crap did Jane do? Steal all your pop-tarts? I have to have a quick magic lesson with Stephen then we can do something. Wanna do wings and beer? I could use some girl talk. –I

She was shocked at how fast Darcy was able to reply.

No worse, Thor screwed off somewhere again and she's been insufferable ever since! Okay that sounds good! Just hurry the HELL up!-D

She winced, she knew just how Jane was when Thor left, a big old ball of insufferable crap.

I'll try my best! I will text you when I am done!-I

Darcy texted her back a thumbs up and she put her phone in her back pocket. Finding a pair of socks, she put them on and put on her Doc Martins. Before she left her room, she tidied it a bit and set aside a load of clothes to clean so she could do it later. Exiting her room, she headed straight for Stephen's study she was just too curious about what he had for her. Entering the study, she saw that Stephen was sitting at his desk reading a huge book. As always, she saw that he cleaned up well. Momentarily, his cloak left his side to greet her with a hug and then levitated back to his side. Obviously sensing her presence, he looked up and smiled at her warmly.

She could sense that it was almost like he was assessing her. She blushed a little at that and approached his desk slowly. She walked up to his side and his arm automatically shot out and wound itself around her waist. She wasted no time in cuddling into his side.

"What are you reading?" She asked curiously.

"A book about myths and the Mystic Arts." He replied.

She looked at the book curiously, while Stephen opened one of his drawers with his free hand and pulled something out of it. He gestured for her to hold out her hand and he dropped something shiny and metallic in the center of her palm.

"That, is a sling ring. It will help you to summon portals. That is what I want to teach you today." He explained.
He gestured for her to put the sling ring on and she complied. Letting go of her waist, he went to the center of his study and she sensed that he wanted her to follow him so she did. She had a feeling this would be just like all the other times he taught her how to do something.

"Alright, I will show you what arm movements to use to summon a portal. You have to remember to concentrate really hard on where you want to end up or you may not end up where you want to be." He explained again.

"Now watch carefully." He said.

He showed her which movements to use and she copied them but of course nothing happened so she tried to concentrate harder. She had Darcy in the back of her mind and she could sense that Stephen knew that something was up.

"Something is bothering you," He stated.

"Um no?" She said unconvincingly.

He gave her a look that said 'Really? Did you really just say that?'

She sighed.

"Okay, Darcy texted me earlier saying she would like to leave the tower for a bit. Would it be okay to leave the Sanctum for a couple hours?" She asked hopefully.

He looked at her hard for a moment and then nodded.

"As long as you can show me that you can summon a portal, yes." He agreed.

She frowned.

'Leave it to him to give me a stipulation.' She thought a little bit annoyed.

"Argh, fine!" She said, sticking out her tongue at him to which he rolled his eyes at.

She cleared her mind and then concentrated really hard. It took her a few tries and a few swears to perfect her movements but she finally got it. A blue portal appeared in the center of the room.

Looking at it, she thought of something. Every time she tried to summon something, it was always blue and she wondered why that was. Inwardly, she shrugged it off for now. She saw that Stephen was looking at her with pride.

"Well done!" He praised.

"Thank you." She said smiling.

"You can go visit your friend now, but please be careful!" He said seriously.

Nodding to him, she dismissed the blue portal and placed the sling ring in her pocket.

"Always." She reassured him.

Without warning, he entered her personal space. He ran his hand through her loose tresses and placed a lingering kiss on her temple. She couldn't say that she didn't enjoy it every time he did that. Reluctantly, he stepped out of her personal space to let her go.

"Good." He murmured.
Giving him one last parting smile, she left his study. Quickly, she went back to her room to get her money. Leaving her room, she went to the foyer and pulled the sling ring back out of her pocket. She decided that now was a good as any time to practicing summoning portals. In all honesty, there were a lot people she would rather stay the hell away from in that tower so if she summoned a portal in Darcy's apartment in the tower she could avoid all that shit.

Checking her phone, she realized it was already 3:30pm and her mismatched eyes widened in shock. Darcy was probably going to kill her ass at this rate. After sending a quick text to Darcy, she put on the sling ring. She put a clear picture of Darcy's apartment in her mind and summoned a portal. She was pleasantly surprised to see that it actually worked. She mentally patted herself on the back. She entered the portal and ended up in Darcy's apartment on the other side.

She dismissed the portal and saw that Darcy was standing in her kitchen looking at her with huge eyes.

"What in the HELL was THAT?" Darcy exclaimed.

She laughed.

"Relax D, it was just a portal. I was just practing something new I learnt today." She explained.

She sensed that Darcy had calmed down some.

"Wow that was pretty cool, did your boyfriend teach you that?" Darcy teased.

Her eyes bulged slightly and she choked indignantly.

"Oh my god D, he is not my boyfriend!" She protested weakly.

Darcy merely looked at her in disbelief.

"Do you even hear what you sound like, girl? You are so full of shit." Darcy laughed.

She merely rolled her eyes.

"Are we doing something or not?" She asked in mock indignation.

"Of course we but I wanna fix your hair and face first." Darcy replied.

Irena made a face at that, she wasn't one for tones of make up or hair product but Darcy like to do it so she put up with it. She let Darcy lead to the bathroom so she could be primped. Darcy got to work and fixed her hair so the curls were a little less frizzy and applied just enough make up to bring out her natural features. Thankfully it wasn't too much. Darcy showed her the end result and she felt pretty good about herself.

She smiled at her reflection.

"Thanks D; you really know how to make a girl feel good." She praised.

"You're welcome. Now let's blow this joint!" Darcy exclaimed, smiling.

She and Darcy wasted no time in leaving the apartment and managed to sneak out of the tower without getting caught thankfully. Because the little pub was so close by, there was no point in cabbing it so walking it was. On the way there, they caught up on all kinds of things.

"So D, do you like anybody?" She asked curiously.
For the first time in her life, she watched Darcy stumble on the side walk and freeze in place.

"Um, no?" Darcy said unconvincingly.

Her mismatched eyes widened, oh Darcy had it bad for somebody big time. Now she was just curious.

"Okay D, who do you like." She prodded.

Darcy paused for a moment and then whispered something that she could barely hear.

"What was that now?" She asked again.

Darcy sighed.

"I said, I like Bucky." She confessed.

OH, oh wow, she could see why Darcy would be so afraid about that but in reality she had zero reasons to be. In reality Bucky, was extremely lonely and wished somebody that wasn't her or Steve would talk to him but everyone was so petrified of him so it was hard. Maybe she could push Darcy in the right direction.

"Oh D, it's okay. Just talk to Bucky and I promise everything will be okay. Believe me he is so lonely he would welcome it." She advised.

Darcy looked at her incredulously.

"Seriously, he won't like freak out on me or something?" Darcy asked uncertainly.

She couldn't help but laugh a little and Darcy gave her a withering glare.

"D, I promise he won't." She reassured.

They reached the pub and suddenly she felt that something was off. She could see that Darcy sensed it too. Looking around, she saw what the problem was. There was Toby of all people standing in front of the pub screaming drunken bloody murder at some girl who was clearly telling him to go to hell. She and Darcy looked at each other and made to run in the other direction but Toby saw the both of them before they could.

'Ooh why me?' She thought to herself.

Stephen

Stephen was in the library with Wong organizing books when he felt a jolt of fear running through his system didn't belong to him. It took him no time at all to figure out that the fear belonged to Irena and that something was very wrong. In the back of his mind, he wondered how he could feel Irena's fear when she wasn't even in the Sanctum but those questions were for a later time. Right now he needed to get to Irena as fast as he could. He called his cloak to himself leaving a very confused Wong behind wondering what in the hell just happened.

He left the Sanctum levitating through New York and it took him no time at all to locate Irena and what he saw made his blood almost boil over. She and her friend, Darcy, he believed her name was, were being cornered by some drunken asshole. He knew that the man was drunk because he sought out his emotions. Not only was he very drunk he was very angry too. He levitated closer to the scene and he could hear Irena shouting.
"Get away from us, Toby!" She yelled.

He realized that this was the man that Irena had told him about earlier in the day and his ire increased tenfold. He felt his magic pulse angrily and a dark, hazy feeling fall over his mind. He wondered vaguely if this was what Irena went through when she lost control of her magic. He watched the stupid drunken man push Irena onto the ground and then he was lost. His eyes darkened to black and he dropped himself in front of Toby so Irena was behind him. He had no intention of letting this asshole leave here alive.

Irena

Everything was all hazy; when Toby pushed her to the ground she must have hit the back of her head on something. Touching the back of her head gingerly, she pulled her hand away and it was covered in blood. Crap, this was bad. She couldn't defend herself with her magic while she was in this state. Suddenly, Stephen appeared in front of her like an angel in the night and he was pissed off. She sensed the pissed off was actually an understatement. His magic was out of control. So this is what she looked like when she lost control of her magic. This was not good.

If she didn't somehow stop him, he would kill Toby and regret it for the rest of his life. Getting up off the ground, she fought off a huge dizzy spell and the urge to hurl. She turned to Darcy briefly and motioned for her to stay put. She tried to stumble over to Stephen.

"Stephen." She croaked.

Stephen briefly turned around and she saw that his eyes were pitch black.

'Ooh no, this is no not good!' She thought.

She had to stop him somehow. She saw that the cloak was also trying to stop him to no avail too. Just as he lifted his arm up to fire off a spell, she managed to latch onto the front of him but it distracted him a little bit but it wasn't quite enough. Getting up on her very tippy toes, she placed her hands on either side of his face and forced him to look at her.

"Stephen, stop, please. You don't wanna do this he isn't worth it!" She begged, she felt tears begin to stream down her face.

She could see the haze lift slightly and he looked down at her. She saw that his eyes softened as he saw the tears streaming down her face. It was enough to break most of the haze. She watched him look back at Toby angrily.

"Listen boy and listen well. The only reason you are still alive is because of her. Now get out of here before I change my mind!" He snarled angrily.

Luckily, Toby didn't need to be told twice. He seemed to know that Stephen meant business and screwed off quickly, thank god.

Sensing that his emotions were returning mostly to normal, she breathed a sigh of relief. Suddenly, the urge to hurl became overwhelming and she pushed Stephen out of the way with strength she didn't even know that she possessed so she could be sick. Everything started to blur together and she felt her legs give out from underneath her. She knew Stephen caught her before she hit the ground thankfully. She could hear that both Stephen and Darcy were trying to talk to her but it was useless. She could no longer fight the darkness trying to consume her and passed out.
To Gain a New Friend

Chapter Notes

Hello all! I am going to be putting up a bunch of new chapters for this thing today! I am going to try and get all of them up today so keep checking back for them! Again, thanks for the kudos(s) and subscriptions they mean a lot!

Irena

Letting out a painful noise, Irena forced her eyes to open. She tried to sit up and regretted it almost instantly. She didn't know what felt worse, the nausea or the insane pounding coming from the back of her head. She sat still for a moment, trying to will away the nausea and the pounding to no avail. For a split second she wondered just what in the hell happened to her until she remembered. She remembered bumping to Toby with Darcy at the pub and then Toby launching into a drunken tirade at her. She also remembered being pushed to the ground, hence the mess that the back of her head was. After getting her head smashed into the ground, Stephen was suddenly in front of her. She managed to stop him from killing Toby and then nothing. She must have passed out after that.

Suddenly, one very important thought crossed her mind, what in the hell happened to Darcy?

She tried to put herself into a sitting position. She managed to do it but it made her head hurt like hell. She was however relieved to feel the nausea dissipate a little. Now she just felt the nausea that was associated with extreme hunger. Because Toby decided to be a giant dick and ambush her and Darcy, neither she nor Darcy got the chance to actually eat. Looking around, she realized very quickly that she was not in her own room. This room was way too ornate and large to be her room. It took her no time at all to put two and two together and realized that she was in fact in Stephen's room. Sweet lord, what happened after she passed out?

Looking down at herself, she saw that she no long her had her Tragically Hip shirt on, she was also minus her pants too. Instead she had on what she could only presume to be one of Stephen's night shirts on. She gathered that she must have bled all over the back of her shirt which pissed her off because that shirt had been her favorite. Stephen must have taken off her pants to make her more comfortable. She blushed a little at the thought of Stephen seeing her underwear. She knew that he used to be a doctor so seeing underwear was probably moot to him anyway.

She touched the back her head gingerly and winced. Just what in the hell had she fallen on anyway? As she contemplated that, Stephen entered the room holding what she could only assume was an ice pack wrapped up in a towel in one hand and a bowl of soda crackers in the other hand. He looked very relieved to see that she was up. Placing the soda crackers on the night table next to the bed, he sat on the edge of the bed and looked at her intensely. He was looking at her in a way that she had never experienced before. It was indescribable.

"How are you feeling?" He asked, she could hear hints of worry in his voice.

She knew that she couldn't lie to him so she told him the truth.

"Very crappy." She replied truthfully.
She could sense that he was still very pissed off at Toby for hurting her but he kept his emotions in control thankfully.

"Where is Darcy?" She asked slightly worried.

Stephen chuckled a little at that question and she wondered why.

"Don't worry about Darcy. I made sure she got back to the tower safely. She didn't want to leave your side though she is…stubborn." He said.

She tried to laugh at what he said because Darcy being stubborn was an understatement but she regretted it instantly. The pounding returned tenfold.

"Oooow." She moaned in pain.

She tried to touch the back of her aching head but Stephen's large hand curled around her small one and stopped her before she could.

"I know it hurts, sweetheart, but don't touch it okay?" He intoned softly.

Sighing softly, she frowned and nodded.

Gently, Stephen guided her head forward so he could check her wound.

"Well, it doesn't appear that you'll need any stitches thankfully, but you do have a small concussion and will have to take it easy for a few days." He assessed.

Her frowned deepened hearing that, she hated being stuck in bed.

Giving her a tender look, he massaged away the frown lines in her forehead with his thumb.

"Hey don't worry so much, you won't be missing anything important I promise." He reassured.

She nodded but she still felt really pouty about it. She was about to say as much but her stomach let out a loud unladylike growl and it caused her to blush profusely. She was reminded of the fact that she hadn't eaten since she didn't even remember when. Letting out a deep chuckle, Stephen picked up the bowl of soda crackers from the side table and handed them to her.

"Here, you should eat something. It will help you to feel better." He said.

"Thank you." She said, giving him a look of extreme appreciation.

As she munched away on the soda crackers, Stephen placed the ice pack on the back of her head and she let out a relieved sigh. She continued to munch until her body told her that she had to go to the bathroom right the hell now. Sweet lord almighty. Dropping the crackers back onto the night table, she immediately tried to wriggle out of the sheets. Sensing her urgency, Stephen helped get out of the bed.

"Whatever is the matter?" He asked curiously.

"Bathroom." She responded.

Despite being extremely unsteady in her feet, she moved at a pretty quick speed. She could sense Stephen's concern about her falling on her ass but at the moment all she could think about was making it to the toilet on time. She entered the bathroom and got down to business just in time. Letting out a sigh of relief, she finished up quickly and cleaned herself up. Now that she didn't feel
like she was going to wet the floor anymore, she decided to take a little look around Stephen's bathroom. She was shocked at the sheer size of it. The bath tub was almost like a swimming pool. Immediately against her will, a couple of dirty thoughts entered her mind concerning her, Stephen and that bath tub. She couldn't believe herself, not that her mind was never in the gutter once and while but she was not one to be thinking dirty thoughts out of the blue like that. She wondered if it had something do with Toby skewing her views on that stuff.

Shaking out of those thoughts, she turned to leave the bathroom and was hit with the worst vertigo spell she had ever felt before. She knew vertigo was a symptom of a concussion but she never knew it could be this bad. Her hands latched onto the bathroom vanity for dear life. If she didn't do something quickly, she would be ass over tea kettle onto the floor. She knew that she couldn't make it back to the bed on her own. How embarrassing. She hated being like this.

"Stephen!" She called out.

It took Stephen no time at all to reach the bathroom and realize what the problem was. She knew that he could sense her embarrassment. Giving her a soft look, he gently unclenched her hands from the vanity and wrapped them around his neck. He then scooped her up in his arms and carried her back to the bed. He helped her get comfortable and back under the sheets. She looked away from him and started picking at the fluffs on his shirt.

"I'm sorry. She murmured.

Gently, Stephen placed two fingers under her chin and forced her to meet those stormy blue eyes of his. He stroked her messy hair back as he did so.

"Irena, none of this is your fault do you understand? Vertigo is a common symptom of concussions it will pass I promise." He reassured.

She nodded and then let out a soft yawn.

"You are tired. You should try to sleep and I will wake you in a couple of hours." He said.

"Okay, will you stay with me?" She asked softly.

"Of course." He replied.

She moved slightly so he could climb into bed with her. Immediately, she tried to curl around his form and she nuzzled into his chest. She watched him pluck the ice pack off of the end table where he must have left it when he came to help her in the bathroom and he placed it gently on the back of her sore head. She let out a soft sigh; she never knew that an ice pack could feel so good. Slowly, she felt herself drift off to sleep.

For the next two days, it went mostly the same way. She would be woken up every two hours by Stephen, eat a couple of soda crackers and then drift back off to sleep. Most of the time, Stephen would stay with her but sometimes he couldn't because he did have things to do and that would make her very pouty.

On the second day of her bedridden hell, Stephen gave her a couple of books to read which helped pass the time when he couldn't stay with her so that helped a lot. On the third day, she was beginning to lose her damn marbles. She did NOT do well stuck in one place and it was beginning to show big time. She decided that it was time to get moving again. Apparently, Stephen agreed because on a little ornate chair that sat next to the bathroom sat a change of her clothes. She blushed a little bit knowing that he was in her room going through her stuff but was super happy she didn't have to tip
toe around the Sanctum in Stephen's night shirt and no pants. The thought of Wong catching her sent a nasty shudder through her system. She was pretty sure Stephen thought the same thing.

Grabbing the clothes off of the chair, she went to go take a shower. Entering the bathroom, she headed straight for the shower. She did look at the bathtub longingly over her shoulder, however she knew that she would able to enjoy that little gem at a later time. Stripping down, she hopped into the shower which was pretty awesome in its own right. She quickly cleaned herself up and washed out her crow's nest head being careful not to aggravate the wound on the back of her head. Satisfied that she was clean, she turned the water off and hopped out of the shower. As she sorted through her clothes, her toothbrush fell out of the pile which she was super thankful for. She really didn't want to go around the place sporting super stinky breath.

As she sorted through her clothes, she determined that they were of the comfy variety which made her very happy. There were definite pros to having a boyfriend that always knew exactly what you needed when you needed it. She blushed a little bit at the word 'boyfriend' because neither she nor Stephen had discussed exactly what they 'were' yet but deep down she knew that is what it was and she liked it.

After getting dressed, she brushed her teeth and towel dried her hair. She just decided to leave her hair to just do its thing seeing as she wasn't going anywhere today. Grabbing her dirty clothes and her toothbrush, she exited it Stephen's room. It took her no time at all to locate her room thankfully. She decided that she was well enough to take care of her dirty laundry and switch out her books. She had many things in the library that she wanted to research like what on God's green earth a guardian was for an example.

She took care of her dirty laundry first and then headed down to the library. Immediately, she sensed that something was not quite right. Entering the library, she realized that it was way more quiet than usual. She spotted Wong hiding behind a bookshelf looking very disturbed and wondered what was going on. She approached Wong carefully and gave him a questioning look.

"Um Wong, is everything okay?" She asked carefully.

Wong turned to look at her.

"Not that I am happy to see that you are alright, little sister because I am. But I have a big problem to deal with right now." He answered.

She looked at him weirdly.

"There's a problem?" She asked curiously.

Wong sighed and ran hand through his short cropped hair.

"I was practicing my summoning spells and something went wrong. I summoned something and the portal closed before I could send it back!" He explained.

"Well, if we caught whatever you summoned. Could you send it back?" She wondered.

"Theoretically yes, but then again I was never able to actually summon anything before so I don't know if I'll be able to even send it back!" He exclaimed.

She looked at Wong in shock; she had never seen him like this before. Usually he was so level headed. What could he have summoned that was so bad? Or did he think Stephen was going to kill him for summoning whatever it was he summoned?
"Okay, I'm going to check it out. It can't be THAT bad." She said.

Wong tried to protest but she was already weaving her way through the shelves. She swore she could hear him mutter something that vaguely sounded like 'Stephen is going to kill me'. She snorted to herself; she would make sure he didn't. When she reached the very last book shelf, she heard it. It sounded like some weird growling noise. She peeked behind the book shelf and was shocked to see two big cat-like yellow eyes staring right back at her. Her mismatched eyes widened in shock. Was that...what that an actually freaking DRAGON?

Getting a closer look, she realized that it must just be a baby. It was very small and she could tell it was built for the water. It had a sort of a serpentine body and it was covered in shiny blue scales. Four little webbed feet and a long tail. It also had a pair of little horns atop of its little blue head. She could sense its fear and she could also sense it was pretty harmless. She approached it carefully.

"Hey little guy, don't worry I won't hurt you." She said softly.

The little dragon looked up at her curiously and cautiously approached her. She held out her hand and the little dragon gave it a curious taste with its little forked tongue. The little dragon decided that she was okay and walked right up to her to check her out more. Suddenly, she began hearing something in her mind. It was very muddled and she couldn't understand very much of it at all. Was that the dragon trying to talk to her in her mind? Whatever it was, she supposed her magic wasn't up to par enough to understand it yet. The one thing she did know was that she could sense that the little dragon was female.

She gained the little dragon's trust enough that she would be able to pick her up. Managing to pick her up, she walked back over to where she left Wong and didn't notice that Stephen was now there too.

"Wong! I got the...Oh crap." She said, noticing Stephen standing there.

Stephen looked ready to rip Wong a new one. He turned to her and looked at her in shock.

"This is what you summoned? How in the hell did you manage to summon a Dragon, Wong?" He exclaimed.

Wong looked like he had no idea how to even answer that question.

"Um, I don't know?" He squeaked.

"Relax Stephen, she's just a baby dragon, see?" She said, showing him the little dragon.

"Hmm, it's just a baby water dragon. Can you send it back, Wong?" He asked.

"I can try." Wong replied.

At those words, the little dragon began to fuss in her arms. She seemed to understand what was about to happen.

"Awww she doesn't want to go back. Does she have to?" She pouted at Stephen.

Stephen frowned at her.

"Yes she most certainly does! She'll run amok if she stays here! How did you know it was female? It's almost impossible to tell the difference a male and female dragon so I've read." He asked curiously.
She shrugged.

"She told me." She said by way of explanation.

He gave her a curious look, one that she didn't quite understand. She looked up at him and put on the best puppy dog eyes that she could muster.

"Please Stephen; she really doesn't want to go back there." She begged.

She could sense that she had him caving.

"Alright, fine! But you have to do the research on how to care for her and if she becomes too much too care for, she has to go back." He stated.

She nodded.

"Fair enough." She agreed.

She could hear Wong making whipping noises behind Stephen and she let out a snort of laughter. Stephen on the other hand, glared at Wong in a way that should have had him 6 feet under.

"WONG!" He warned.

Wong held up his hands in surrender.

"Right, I'll be leaving now!" He said, disappearing behind a bookshelf.

She looked at the little dragon in her arms.

"Right, you need a name. How about Sapphire?" She tried.

The little dragon made a happy little noise and climbed higher on her shoulder.

"Well, that was easy enough." She laughed.

She looked back at Stephen and smiled happily. She entered his personal space and hugged him.

"Thank you." She said happily.

She felt his arms encircle her and she couldn't help but sink into him more.

"I can't deny you anything." He mumbled.

Suddenly, their moment was interrupted by Stephen's cloak trying to shoo Sapphire off of her shoulder. She could sense its jealousy. Sapphire let out a little growl and tried to pick back at it. Oh crap, she did not expect this.

"Oh come on you guys! There's enough of me to go around." She joked.

She heard Stephen let out a deep chuckle above her.

"Is this what I have to deal with for sharing you with everyone? I'd rather keep you to myself." He laughed.

She rolled her eyes at him.

"Okay, I am gonna go research about my new pet here." She said.
"Alright, I have a few things I have to take care of, please be good and stay out of trouble." He ordered softly.

She was about to tell him a smart-ass reply when he lent in closer to her. She froze momentarily, was he going to actually kiss her? Just as his lips were about to touch hers, His cloak yanked him back trying to shoo away Sapphire again and he growled in irritation. She laughed softly.

"Go and do what you have to do." She murmured, stroking the side of his face.

"You are making it incredibly hard to leave." He growled.

"And you love it." She replied cheekily.

She left him standing there in shock, disappearing behind a couple of bookshelves hips swaying seductively.

She had no idea where that came from, but she enjoyed every minute of it. Looking around, she managed to acquire a couple of books on dragons. She hoped it would be enough. Coming out from behind the bookshelves, she saw that Stephen had gone. She was shocked at the side of her that Stephen brought out but she enjoyed every minute.

Giggling to herself, she left the library with Sapphire and the books in tow. She made her way back to her room and sat down at her desk. She started reading through the books. She determined that Sapphire was indeed a baby water dragon. Thankfully, she didn't fly and she wasn't going to get very big either so that was a good thing. She also didn't eat meat, just fish, nuts and fruit. She continued to read and learned that water dragons essentially had the personality of a large house cat.

Of all the different types of dragons Wong could have summoned, he ended up picking the best one.

Letting out a yawn, she felt her energy wane and the back of her head began to hurt a little bit. She supposed it was time for a nap. Getting up from her desk, she went over to her bed and got comfortable. Sapphire decided get comfortable and curled up beside her head. Looking at her phone on her night table, she decided that it would be a good idea to let Darcy know that she was alive. After she did that, she let herself drift off to sleep.

Dream/Memory

6 Year old Irena watched as Mr. Mordo gave a lesson to some students. She couldn't do any of the magic they could yet but it was fun to watch and assist him. After he finished, he took her back to who she learned they called the 'Ancient One'. To her, she was the closest thing she had that could be considered a 'mother'. She cared for her like one anyway. She saw the both of them and smiled.

"Was my Irena a good helper today?" She asked Mordo warmly.

Mordo smiled and nodded.

"She did very well today, Ancient One." He agreed.

She bent down and caressed her head.

"My sweet child, would you like to get something to eat?" She asked.

As her stomach growled, Irena nodded.

"Yes please!" She replied politely.
She held out her hand for Irena to grab and she grabbed it right away. As they were about to leave together, a shout sounded through the training yard.

"I know my daughter is in here! I want her back now!" An angry voice snarled.

"Sweet child, please stay with Mr. Mordo. I must take care of this." She said sadly, nudging Irena in the direction of Mordo.

Mordo scooped Irena up and left the training grounds with her as quickly as he could.

"Come little one, you don't need to hear any of that." He said solemnly.

Just as they were out of hearing range, she heard some kind of yell, then a squelch and the nothing. Even though she was young, she was far from stupid. She knew that her father hated her and only wanted her back to hurt her or to make her magic go away. She also knew that 'Mother' just made him go away for good and she wasn't even sad about it. That made her feel terrible. She couldn't help the sob that escaped her tiny throat and Mordo just held onto her tighter.

Suddenly, Irena's mismatched eyes snapped open and she choked on her tears. That was by far the worse dream she ever had, worse than the previous one. Why was she dreaming these things? What were they?

**Stephen**

Lying in bed, Stephen let out a sigh. Being in bed just simply wasn't the same without Irena, he was becoming spoiled by her and he knew it. When she teased him in the library, he enjoyed it immensely. She was like a little kitten, playful one minute and affectionate the next. She was HIS kitten. He loved all of it. Now here he was without her and it was driving him mad. Suddenly, he was ripped from his thoughts by the most terrible sadness he ever felt. The door cracked open and in stepped Irena. She looked terrible. Clearly, she another foul dream, her hair was more wild than usual and her tank top and sleepy pants were all skewed. He saw the little dragon clinging to her pant leg. He supposed he would have to get used to that. The little dragon adored her.

He gestured for her to come to him.

"Oh sweetheart what happened to you?" He asked worried.

She tried to explain to him but she was too upset. He helped her to climb into bed with him and she wasted no time in clinging to him sobbing into his chest. He rocked her back and forth and cooed to her. He watched the tiny dragon also try to comfort her. Finally, she was calm enough to try and explain him what had upset her so much.

He listened her to explain about the dream and he was shocked. That was in fact a suppressed memory. He was sorry that it happened but knew that The Ancient One did it to protect her. If that man who called himself her father got a hold of her there was no telling what would have happened.

It was clear that she used a memory suppressor spell on Irena and it was wearing off. All he could do was help her through it.

And he would do anything he could for her.
Curling into Stephen's side, she let out a soft sigh. That dream or memory, whatever the hell it was, really did a number on her. She didn't know if it was because her father was essentially killed in it or the fact that it was clear that he hated her ass because of her magic. She knew deep, deep down that the Ancient One did the right thing. She couldn't imagine what would have happened to her if her father had gotten a hold of her. He would have most likely killed her trying to 'get rid' of her magic. She could feel the tears pricking at the corners of her mismatched eyes. She knew that Stephen could sense her sadness. She felt his arm tighten around her. She couldn't help the tears that slid down her cheeks. Gently, Stephen turned her in his arms so she was facing him. Looking at her tenderly, he wiped away her tears.

Stephen

Stephen let out a sigh. Oh, his poor little kitten. He could feel her sadness and he wanted nothing more to make it go away. Looking down, he could see that her tiny dragon wanted to do the same. She was currently curled up under Irena's arm. He knew that all of this was immensely hard on her. Repressed memories were never easy to deal with, magically repressed ones were even worse. As the spell continued to wear off, more memories would randomly return more than likely without much warning. He had to figure out a way to make it easier on her. He decided that the best thing to do would be help her find more about herself and her magic which meant he would have to locate more information on the Guardians. He knew he could enlist Wong to help him out with that.

As for the memories, he could think of no other solution but to have her just stay in his room with him. He knew that what seemed to help the most when she was that distraught was him just being there with her. He couldn't help but think about all the other ways that could benefit him, God help him and his dirty mind. He shook himself of those thoughts quickly; she needed him to comfort her right now. The other stuff could come later.

Looking down, he saw that she was drifting between being asleep and awake. Poor sweet girl, he could sense that she been more fatigued than usual probably from the concussion she received from that…boy. Just thinking about the incident made his hackles rise, he had to get his emotions in control before Irena could feel them. She was finally calming down and the last thing he wanted to do was disturb her. Calming himself, he joined Irena in drifting between being asleep and awake.

Sometime later, he could sense that she was waking up for good. He watched her sit up and stretch. She turned to face him, resting her chin against her palms and her elbows against his pillow. She looked at him with a grateful look.

"Thank you for everything." She said softly.

He gave her a warm smile. He could sense that she was feeling much calmer.
"You are welcome. Would you be interested in coming to my study after you've cleaned yourself up for the day?" He asked.

He decided it would be better to have Irena with him when he sorted through the information he had on the Guardians. He thought it might help her understand what was happening to her. She gave him a curious look.

"Is it another magic lesson?" She asked curiously.

He shook his head.

"Not this time, I have something else in mind to show you." He explained.

She nodded and reluctantly got out of bed. Her tiny little Dragon climbed up her pant leg and sat on her shoulder. He walked with her to his doorway. She turned to face him and wrapped her arms around his waist. She stood up on her tippy toes and placed a kiss on his jaw. He couldn't help the noise that erupted from the back of his throat.

"You are playing with fire." He purred.

She gave him a playful look.

"I know." She giggled.

He forced himself to stay in check. Did she even know what she was doing to him? Probably not, that was one of the things that drew him to her like that moth to a flame. She could be so delectable without even realizing it. Even with her messy hair and rumbled sleep clothes. He reluctantly detangled himself from her to open the door for her. He was NOT expecting what was on the other side. His cloak levitated into the room and immediately made a beeline to little Sapphire perched on Irena's shoulder. It immediately tried to shoo the little dragon off of her shoulder. The dragon of course let out a growl and tried to snap back at it. This whole entire situation was so ridiculous that he had no idea what to even do with it. Apparently, he wasn't the only one who hated sharing Irena.

He watched curiously as Irena gently separated the little Dragon and his cloak.

"Come on you two, behave yourselves." She admonished softly.

He watched the cloak wrap around her. She let out a musical little laugh.

"Relax you silly cloak, I still love you." She laughed.

The cloak seemed to be satisfied with her response and disengaged from her.

He couldn't believe the attraction that anything magical seemed to have to her. She really was meant for this world. It was amazing to watch. He inwardly sighed, he really didn't want to let her leave but he had no choice. He really was 'whipped' as Wong indicated yesterday and it didn't bother him one bit. He decided that he would have her stuff moved to his room as soon as he could with her permission of course. She provided him with one last smile before exiting his room. He turned to his cloak and looked at it with exasperation.

Irena

Walking back to her room, Irena wondered what Stephen wanted to show her. She had a feeling that it was something important. She really owed him so much for helping her through all of this. Honestly, she no idea what the hell she would have done had her memories started to return without
him. She was so grateful to Tony for trying to get her help even thought she had been a total stubborn asshole about the whole thing.

'Poor Tony.' She thought.

The more she thought about Tony the more she felt bad. She decided that she would have to call him soon. Her anger at the whole mechanic thing waned a bit ago but she had been so busy trying to deal with these memories and whatnot that he had been placed on the back burner. She was terrible daughter. After she figured out what Stephen wanted to talk to her about she would rectify the situation. Entering her room, she pried Sapphire off her shoulder, grabbed some clothes to change into and got ready to hop in the shower. She cleaned herself up and finished up quickly. Getting out of the shower, she dressed herself and brushed her teeth. Seeing as her *Tragically Hip* shirt was no more, she decided to go back to her *Guns N' Roses* shirt. She threw on her pants and found a pair of clean socks. She brushed out her hair and decided to keep on keeping it down. Stephen seemed to like it better that way.

Satisfied with her appearance, she left the bathroom. Sapphire immediately came up to her and crawled back up to her to perch on her shoulder. She slipped on her *Doc Martins* and left her room. Thinking deep down, she hoped that Stephen might ask her to stay in his room with him permanently. Otherwise she would just keep on coming to him over and over. It was getting hard to be without him during the night. Reaching Stephen's study, she opened the door and was not shocked to see him there; brows furrowed pouring over a huge book. She continued to be amazed at how well he cleaned up. She approached his desk and he looked up and smiled at her.

"There you are, come over here." He said, gesturing for her to come closer to him.

She complied with what he asked of her and he wasted no time in wrapping his arm around her waist. She cuddled into his side.

"I want to read to you a few passages from this book. Is that alright with you?" He asked.

She nodded.

"Sure." She replied.

"**The Myth of The Guardians:** Long ago, the first wielders of magic were born with the ability to wield it. They called themselves the Guardians. They taught magic to whomever they deemed worthy of learning. They watched over all living things and were the epitome of all things good. They kept the balance between good and evil in check. As time went on, they made sure to pass down their genes to keep the cycle going. It's said that they even made special relics for them to wield alone. Only one remains in existence, the *Dragon's Tear*. Such a relic cannot be wielded by normal sorcerers, the results would be chaotic. **Decedents of the Guardians:** Decedents of the guardians are easily recognizable by their ability to wield blue magic. They also have the uncanny ability to communicate telepathically with all things magical. All things magical are drawn to them. Their magic is exceptionally hard to control and thus they need a patient teacher to help them along the way. **Note:** Should the Decedent of the Guardians fall to evil the entire universe will fall into chaos." He read.

She said there trying to digest what he just read. Deep down, she knew that she was this 'Descendent of the Guardians' and it scared the shit out of her. How could she handle all of this? She knew that Stephen could sense the complete disaster that her emotions were. He shifted her so she was just about on his lap.

"Kitten, are you alright?" He asked softly.
She thought for a moment on how to answer that.

"Am I…am I a freak?" She asked, her voice cracking a little.

She felt him suck in a large breath at the question.

"No!" He said a little too harshly. "I mean, no of course not." He said a little more calmly.

"You are so very special. Don't you ever think any different." He intoned.

She nodded. She knew that he could sense that she needed a break to let all of the information she just learned sink in.

"Do you want a break, sweetheart?" He asked softly.

She nodded.

"Yeah, that would be really good." She replied.

Sliding out from between his legs, she gave Sapphire a command to stay with Stephen because wanted to leave and go get a coffee and she didn't think regular humans would take too well to seeing somebody with a dragon perched on their shoulder. Luckily, she listened and went about exploring Stephen's desk. He looked heavenward and let out a sigh. But she could sense that he wasn't mad at all. He got up and entered her personal space. He ran his hand through her messy locks and placed a tender kiss on her forehead.

"Be good." He murmured.

"Always." She murmured back.

Leaving Stephen's study, she went to her room to pick up her money, phone and iPod. She placed her earphones in her ears and made her way to the foyer of the Sanctum. She cranked up her music and left the Sanctum. As she walked down the side walk, she checked her phone and saw that she had a message from Darcy. She answered Darcy's message and typed another one out and sent it to Tony. She could only hope that he would respond to her soon.

She couldn't believe all the information that Stephen gave her. Was she really the decedent of a race of super sorcerers? Like she couldn't even handle this stuff. It did explain a lot of things though. Could she even handle the responsibility of this power she had in her? Suddenly, she sensed the presence of what she now knew to be the Ancient One. She knew that she was only trying to guide her in the right direction.

>You can do anything you put your mind to, my sweet child

She sighed. She certainly hoped so.

Reaching the coffee shop, she pushed open the door and entered the small building. She loved this little café. It was quiet and small, plus they always made her drink right. Also, her friend Alex worked there. The only one of the boys she lived with at the orphanage that turned into a decent human being. He was very nice to her now and because he came to the café so often, the developed a pretty good friendship. She walked up to the counter and Alex spotted her right away. She could tell that he knew something was a little hinky with her.

"Hey toots, are you alright?" He asked curiously.
She gave him a 'so-so' gesture.

"I'm okay, just dealing with a lot of stuff right now." She replied.

Even though she knew that he didn't believe it, he accepted her answer.

"Alright then, what can I make you today?" He asked with a knowing smile.

She inwardly rolled her mismatched eyes, she wondered why he even asked her anymore.

"The usual, regular iced coffee with chocolate milk instead of white milk please." She said.

"Coming right up!" He exclaimed, striking a ridiculous pose.

She let out a snort of laughter; he always knew just what to do to make her laugh.

As she waited for a drink, she began to feel eyes on her like somebody was staring at her or something. Looking around, she spotted Christine standing a ways away standing at the little counter where you picked up your finished drink and nearly choked on her own spit.

'Ooooh hell nooo!' She thought.

She tried to act as normal as possible. She saw that she was standing with a guy that she assumed was a coworker of some kind. Who she realized was looking at her in the way that a guy would look at a pretty girl. Oh HELL no. She made to go pay for her drink but he approached her and stopped her before she could. She gave him a questioning look and so did Alex for that matter.

"Here, allow me to get that for you." He said trying to come off as chivalrous.

"Um, thank you?" She said but it came out sounding more like a question.

"You are very welcome." He started. He took her cup from Alex and turned it so he could see her same. "Irena, hmm, a pretty name for a pretty girl, Dr. Nicodemus West at your service." He said bowing slightly.

Good bloody lord, egotistical much? She wondered if Stephen was that bad when he was a doctor. She needed to bail out of this situation and fast. Alex sent her a look that clearly asked 'Do you want me to deal with this asshole?' She returned the look with one of her own that said 'I got this'.

"Thank you Dr. West, it was nice to meet you but I have to be going now. Have a nice day." She said pleasantly.

She took her ice coffee from him and made her way to the exit smiling to Alex as she left the café.

After she exited the café, she let out a sigh of relief. That was just all kinds of messed up. Did being this Descendant of the Guardians make everything attracted to her? Like holy crap balls almighty. Thankfully, she never stuck around to see the look on Christine's face. That was all she needed at the moment. Sighing she made her way back to Sanctum; on the way there she decided to pick up a new gossip rag. She needed some kind of mental relief and she knew this would be perfect.

Reaching the Sanctum, she opened the door and entered the foyer. Immediately, she was assaulted by both Sapphire and Stephen's cloak. She let out a laughed at the ridiculous scene they made.

"Alright, alight, there is enough of me to go around." She laughed.
She disposed of her ice coffee cup and decided to head to the living room so she could unwind and enjoy her gossip rag in peace. She got comfortable on the couch and began reading her magazine enjoying the quiet. Suddenly, when she was half way through the magazine, it vanished from her hands. She looked up and saw that Stephen was waving it in front of her face with a shit eating grin of his face that she wanted to punch off.

"Hey! Give that back!" She whined.

He merely shook his head and continued to wave it in front of her face. He clicked his tongue at her.

"I thought I told you to stop reading this crap." He said cheekily.

"And I told you that I didn't care about my damn brain cells and I needed to blow off steam somehow and this is how I've chosen to do it!" She snarled back.

He laughed at her which caused her annoyance to rise considerably.

'Oh that asshole!' She thought completely annoyed.

"If you want it back that badly then come and get it!" He goaded her.

"You better freaking believe I will!" She yelled, jumping off the couch to pounce on him.

Unfortunately, he was faster than her and she missed. She chased him all over the Sanctum determined to get her damn magazine back. No matter what she did, she just could not catch him. She was beginning to get annoyed. They re-entered the foyer and suddenly out of nowhere Sapphire and Stephen's cloak appeared. Stephen's cloak tried to wrap around him to slow him down and Sapphire tried to climb onto his face.

"Why are you all always on her side?" He yelled in exasperation.

She laughed outright at the display. They slowed him down enough and she let out a battle cry as she pounced onto him. She managed throw him off balance enough that he toppled over and she was able to pin him to the ground and steal her magazine back.

"HA! Pinned ya!" She yelled in triumph.

He tried desperately to wriggle out from under her but she managed to keep him in place. Suddenly, he looked at her with a look that she didn't like at all. He freed his arms and began to tickle her hips mercilessly. She dropped the magazine and she couldn't breathe, he was killing her slowly.

"Argh!" She yelled, out of breath.

He used the fact that she was distracted to his advantage and flipped them so he was on top of her. He was staring at her with an affectionate look, clearly he was taking in her flushed face and heavy breathing. Her hair splayed all over the place, he reached up and pushed it back tenderly. Suddenly, he was leaning towards her in a way that made her hold her breath. Was he…was he going to do what she thought was going to do? Sure enough, he gently brushed his lips against hers. The sensation was overwhelming but she enjoyed immensely. He sought to deepen the kiss and she complied. It was the first time she had been kissed in this way and she couldn't get enough of it. His tongue gently probed the inside of her mouth and she shuddered.

She was so lost in the kiss that she failed to notice when her ass started vibrating. It was only when the song 'I am Iron Man' from Black Sabbath started playing from her ass did she break the kiss reluctantly. She buried her face into Stephen's neck and groaned.
Leave it to her 'father' to ruin the best moment of her life.
Panicking slightly, Irena detangled herself from Stephen so she could think properly. She fished her phone from her ass pocket and tapped the answer call button. She did really want to talk to Tony but could he have picked a worse time to call her?

"Hey, Tony." She said, trying to keep her voice level.

"Hey kid, how have you been? I really wanna talk to you about this whole mechanic thing and get a progress report from Doctor Strange. Do you think the two of you could stop by the tower sometime today?" Tony asked.

For a moment she froze completely and then her emotions went sort of haywire. Sweet God in heaven she was all kinds of screwed. She knew that when she and Stephen went to the tower it would likely not take very long for Tony to figure out what was going on between them. He was a lot of things but stupid wasn't one of them. Once he found out, he would more than likely want nothing to do with her and would probably try to vaporize Stephen as well. This was going to blow up in her face like one of his bad science experiments. But she just couldn't tell him 'no' because that would make the situation ten times worse.

'O H MY G O D, how do I even deal with this?' She thought, semi hysterically.

"Sure Tony, what time would you like us to come over?" She replied, praying she still sounded somewhat normal.

To her immense relief, Tony didn't seem to pick up any of the emotions that were currently tormenting her in her voice.

"Anytime is fine, kiddo. I look forward to catching up with you." Tony said, she could hear the excitement in his voice.

She winced at his excitement. Oh this was so, so bad.

"Okay sounds good. I will send you a text when we are on the way." She suggested.

"Sounds like a plan, kid. See you soon." Tony agreed.

She told Tony goodbye and hung up the phone. She made her way over to the couch that sat in the foyer and slid down onto it. Placing her head in her hands, she let out a strangled noise. She knew that Stephen could sense her wild emotions. He came up to her and sat down onto the couch next to her. She felt his cloak wrap around her and Sapphire crawl underneath her arm in an attempt to bring her some comfort. It did help her some. She felt Stephen place an arm around her shoulders.

"Everything is going to go straight to hell in a handbasket." She mumbled.
She heard Stephen sigh.

"Sweetheart, you knew that this would eventually have to happen. All we can do is hope to get through whatever is going to happen even if it isn't going to be very good and hope everything works out in the end. Whatever happens, you will always have me no matter what." He reassured.

Hearing Stephen say that helped a little bit but she was still scared shitless. She was petrified that she would lose the only father she ever had. But she also knew that this was something that was going to happen whether it did now or later. All she could do was hope that no matter how messy the situation got, that it would be okay in the end as Stephen told her. Letting out a small sigh, she snuggled into Stephen and tried to relax before she gave herself a massive coronary. She felt Stephen run his hand through her messy hair and relaxed into him even more. She sat with him for a few more minutes before deciding that she needed to get up and go have a moment alone. Stephen seemed to realize this, and helped her to her feet. Sapphire crawled back up onto her shoulder. For the first time she and the cloak weren't picking at each other even they realized the seriousness of the situation at hand.

She watched him try to call the cloak back to himself, but it didn't seem to want to listen. He looked a little annoyed at it but she merely shrugged. She supposed it thought that she needed more comfort. She giggled a little bit and the annoyed look on his face.

"It's okay Stephen; it's just trying to make me feel better." She giggled.

Stephen let out a little bit of an annoyed sigh but he nodded.

"Alright, go and have your moment alone, I will be waiting for you here." He said.

"Thank you." She said gratefully.

Leaving the foyer with the cloak wrapped around her, she made her way to her room. Entering her room, she sat down on her bed. She worked on trying to even out her emotions. If she went to Tony feeling the way she did, everything would be ten times worse. She took a few deep breaths and tried to clear her mind. She alternated between picking at imaginary fluffs on Stephen's cloak and stroking Sapphire's tiny head. She felt herself calming down a little bit. As much as she wanted to hide in her room for the rest of her life, she knew that it would help shit all at the moment. Sighing, she got up from the bed and made her way back the foyer with Sapphire still attached to her. She figured considering she was going to a place full of super heroes a tiny dragon wouldn't look too out of place. She felt the cloak disengage from her and watched it levitate back to Stephen. He looked at her with affection.

"Feeling better?" He asked softly.

She nodded to him.

"As better as I'll ever be." She affirmed.

Stephen smiled at her.

"Good girl, let's get this over with." He said.

She held back a little bit of a giggle, she knew that Tony wasn't exactly one of his favorite people on the whole planet. She watched him make several precise hand movements and then a portal appeared. She sucked in a deep breath.

'Okay, here goes everything.' She thought to herself.
She watched Stephen step into the portal and she followed suit. She stumbled out into Tony's office. Stephen caught her before she kissed the floor. She would never get used to going through portals. She righted herself quickly and turned to address Tony who was looking at the whole situation in front of him with shock she couldn't help but laugh a little.

"Hey, Tony." She laughed.

"Hey kid, is that...is that a DRAGON?" He asked in shock.

She nodded.

"Her name is Sapphire, I promise she is harmless." She explained.

To prove her point, she gave Sapphire a command to jump onto Tony's desk. The tiny dragon complied and went to explore Tony's desk. Tony wasn't annoyed at all annoyed by Sapphire in fact he watched her with something akin to wonderment.

"Wow kiddo, I can't deny that this magic stuff looks good on you." He commented.

"Thanks, Tony. I'll admit having a decent teacher helps." She replied.

She watched Tony turn his attention to Stephen and looked at him curiously.

"So Strange, how IS the magic training going?" Tony asked curiously.

"Very well, Irena is an amazing pupil. She has learnt everything I've taught her with ease and then some." Stephen stated truthfully.

Much to her shock, she felt Stephen place his hand on her back. She felt his thumb stroke along her back. She couldn't help the reaction she had to his touch. Her face heated up and Tony noticed. He looked at her questioningly. She couldn't BELIEVE what Stephen was doing. It was like he wasn't making any effort to hide anything. Deep, deep down she knew that Stephen knew that trying to hide it would just make things ten times worse and that was why he wasn't making any effort to hide it. But that didn't mean she had to be happy about it. She could sense Tony's ire rising steadily too. Things were about to get messy.

"Somebody mind telling me what in the fuck I am looking at here?" Tony asked angrily.

She flinched at Tony using the word 'fuck'; he rarely ever used that word so she knew that he was pissed. She couldn't even bring herself to look at him anymore and apparently that was all he needed. She looked back up to see Tony looking at her in a way that scared her shitless. Like she might lose him completely over this and she didn't think she could handle that. But she couldn't be without Stephen either. This entire situation just completely messed up.

"I am so sorry." She said softly.

She felt like her heart was breaking open.

"So let me get this straight, you and him are together now? What do you want me to say to this, kid? That I just accept that my daughter is dating somebody that is twice her age like everything is peachy? I can't do that." Tony stated angrily.

"I'm sorry Tony! It just kind of happened! Please don't make me have to try and live without him." She begged.
Tony looked her with a look akin to disgust.

"Really? You would choose him over your own family? Fine kid, do what you want. I can't stop you." He said with a look on his face that made tears spring to her mismatched eyes.

Immediately, she was reminded of what her biological father did and she tried to tell herself that Tony was upset and didn't mean what he said. She had to get out of here before she said something that she would regret. She gave a command to Sapphire to stay at Tony's desk, the little dragon clearly wanted to disobey but didn't. Pulling her sling ring out of her pocket, she quickly summoned a portal and jumped through it. She didn't care where she ended up; she just had to get out of the tower.

As she did this, she failed to hear or see Stephen rounding on Tony angrily.

Tony

He was so pissed off at the moment that he couldn't even see straight. He couldn't even believe he was in the situation he found himself in. He wanted to obliterate the shit out of Strange right now. He couldn't believe that Strange took advantage of his 22 year old vulnerable daughter in that way. The worst part of the whole damn thing was that Irena was totally infatuated with him now. How did he even handle this? He made to give Strange a real piece of his mind, but Strange beat him to it.

"Was that really necessary, Stark? I know the situation isn't ideal but none of it was her fault!" Strange yelled angrily.

"You have no idea what she's been through in the last couple of months and now I fear your little outburst has damaged her more!" Strange continued.

"Yeah well, it's not my fault you took advantage of her you old pervert!" He countered back.

He watched the look on Strange's face morph from anger to complete outrage.

"I did not take advantage of her, it was mutual on both sides and I am not a pervert!" Strange growled lowly.

"That doesn't make it right!" Tony hissed.

"Don't you think I know that!" Strange snarled.

Having had enough of this stupid argument, he pressed a little button on the metal bracelet on his wrist. Parts of his suit came together on his hand and arm. He pointed his arm at Strange's head and was about to let loose a photon blast when Pepper barged though the door.

"What the hell is going on in here?" She yelled.

"This fucker took advantage of our daughter." He explained angrily.

He watched Pepper let out a long sigh. She approached him and made him lower his hand. He looked at her in shock.

"Tony, listen to me. I think you've forgotten how our daughter thinks. After what happened with Toby, do you really think she would let just anybody in her life like that again? You and I both know that Irena wouldn't share her love with just anybody so it must be real." She said softly.

Tony frowned deeply but he knew that Pepper was right.
Irena wasn't one to love easily because of everything she's been though, so if she did give her love she did it with her whole heart. He hated when Pepper was right.

"But the age difference." He protested weakly.

At this, Pepper laughed and shrugged.

"What can I say? Sometimes cupid is stupid? I don't think age difference should be that big of an issue if he is treating her right and taking care of her. Would you really like to see her go back to somebody like Toby for an example?" Pepper countered wisely.

At that suggestion, Tony visibly shuddered and He noticed Strange did too.

'Hmmm, maybe we do have one thing in common.' He thought to himself.

"That's what I thought, so maybe you and Stephen should go find Irena before she does something she'll regret." She suggested.

He relented and nodded. He pressed the little button on his bracelet again and the pieces of suit disengaged from his arm and hand.

"Come on, Merlin. You better hope that cape of yours is working in top shape, you are gonna need it." He said to Strange.

He gestured for Strange to follow him; the sorcerer gave him the stink eye at the nickname but complied.

Neither He nor Strange or even Pepper noticed the set of dark blue eyes staring at the scene through the crack in the door.

Bucky

Bucky just managed to hide himself around the corner as Stark, Strange and Pepper exited Tony's office. That was just too close; his skills as an assassin were starting to get sloppy from being stuck in this stupid building for so long. Well, what that was an interesting situation. He could understand Stark's point of view on the age thing he really could but he knew that Strange was not a threat and she was probably better off being with him that somebody that just couldn't hope to try and understand her. He sighed; he knew Irena was probably a damn mess, Stark made her feel so ashamed of herself. He knew that there was no other way that conversation could have went but still it was incredibly difficult to see. He made to turn away but then he heard a distinct growling noise.

Entering Starks office, he was shocked to see a tiny little blue dragon sitting on Stark's desk looking pretty pissed at being left behind. He looked at it in shock. He could only assume it belonged to Irena and it probably wanted to go back to her. He approached the little dragon carefully.

"Hey little guy, do you want to go back to Irena?" He asked.

The little dragon perked up at idea of getting back to Irena. It jumped onto his metal arm and crawled up to his shoulder.

"Okay, I'll take that as a yes. Come on, then." He said, exiting the office.

Now he needed to find Darcy, she would know where Irena went better than anybody. Thinking that, he shifted uncomfortably. He would actually have to talk to Darcy, god help him. It wasn't that he didn't want to but he was so petrified he would scare her off. Walking to her room, he debated on
what he would say to her. He didn't want to sound stupid. Fuck, the old Bucky would know exactly what to do. He shook his head, the old Bucky didn't exist anymore and this was who he was now. He would just have to wing it.

He knocked on Darcy's door. He heard shuffling and a couple of swear words which made him laugh a little.

"Coming!" She yelled from inside the room.

The door swung open and out popped Darcy. She looked as if she was ready to go out somewhere. She had on a purple hoodie, a pair of ripped up jeans and a pair of converse hi-tops on. She also had her black beanie on her head. Pushing up her glasses, she looked at him in shock. He had to admit she looked cute.

"Bucky." She squeaked in shock.

"Um, what are you doing here?" She asked, clearing her throat as she did so.

He watched her vision lock onto the little blue dragon that sat on his metal shoulder.

"What the hell? Is that a dragon?" She asked in disbelief.

"Um yeah, it belongs to Irena. Listen we have a huge problem. Stark found out about Strange and Irena. It wasn't pretty at all and Irena took off. Do you have any idea where she could have gone at all?" He asked her.

He watched Darcy rub the side of her head with her hand and let out a sigh.

"Oh shit, that is not good at all." She replied.

She thought hard for moment and then it was like he watched a lightbulb go off inside her head.

"Central Park, every time something pissed her off, she would always take a walk to Central Park to cool off." She explained.

He nodded.

"Then that's where we'll go." He affirmed.

_**Irena**_

Irena stumbled out of the blue portal; she couldn't help but let out a small sob. Why in the fuck did her life have to be so screwed up? Looking around, she realized that she ended up in Central Park and breathed a sigh of relief. At least it wasn't Timbuctoo or something like that. Walking over to the nearest park bench, she slid down onto it and put her head into her hands. She was so wrapped up her own despair she didn't sense the two people that sat down on either side of her. Suddenly, something jumped onto her head and started grabbing at her wild hair. Her hand reached up and plucked whatever it was off of her head. She was shocked to see that it was little Sapphire.

"What the hell?" She wondered.

Looking from her left to her right, she was shocked to Darcy on her left and Bucky on her right and they were both looking at her with worry.

"What you guys doing here?" She asked in shock.
"Making sure you don't do anything stupid." Bucky replied honestly.

Darcy nodded in agreement.

"Oh Jesus, thanks a lot for the vote of confidence you two." She said in exasperation.

They both looked at her like 'are you really saying that, Irena?' She knew that she did her fair share stupid shit and had to admit that she was glad they found her.

"Anyway, I am glad you two are here. Tony found out about Stephen and me and lost his shit. He hates me now." She said softly.

Both Bucky and Darcy let out a long sigh.

"Doll face, I think it's impossible for Tony to hate you. You're his daughter, he loves you." He said honestly.

She looked at him uncertainly. Sensing her plight, Sapphire went and curled onto her lap and she scratched her little, scaly head.

"Are you sure?" She asked.

He nodded.

"Sure, I'm sure." He affirmed.

Darcy then spoke up too.

"Honey, it's just an age difference. For shit sakes you could have ended up pregnant with Toby's kid or someting, now THERE's an actual problem." She laughed.

She shuddered in disgust and let out of snort of laughter at the same time.

"Gee, Darcy you really know how to cheer a girl up." She laughed.

Bucky let out a barking laugh too.

"She's right you know. At least you aren't stuck in my position. I mean look at me, I'm 90 years old but I sure as hell don't look it. Could you imagine what it would look like if I were to date women my actual age? Age difference is pretty much moot to me at this point." He chuckled.

The image of Bucky arm and arm with a little old lady had her dying with laughter.

"Okay, okay I get the point." She snickered.

Suddenly, her mismatched eyes widened in shock. She could sense that Tony and Stephen were close by. Both Bucky and Darcy looked at her with worry on their faces.

"Tony and Stephen are coming." She said by way of explanation.

She watched Tony fall out of the sky and land gently onto the grass a ways away from where she sat on the bench. His mask lifted and he made to approach her. Bucky got up and stood in front of her with a questioning look on his face. Tony lifted his hands in a surrender gesture and Bucky accepted it. He sat back down and let Tony approach her carefully. He knelt in front of her and took her small and hands in his metal covered ones.
"Kiddo, I am so sorry. I was shocked, I promise I don't hate you and I would never ever disown you." He said reassuringly.

She couldn't help the tears the pooled in her mismatched eyes.

"Oh Tony, I am so sorry." She mumbled softly.

She hugged him metal suit and all, he returned it and hugged her back tightly.

"Shh, there is nothing to apologize for." He said gently.

She sighed in relief and she felt like a thousand pounds of weight had just been lifted off of her shoulders. She watched Stephen fall from the sky and land a little ways away from the scene she looked at Tony questioningly and he nodded. Getting up from the park bench, she approached Stephen with Sapphire clinging to her shoulder, she walked up to him and he opened up his arms to her. She sunk into him and she felt his cloak wrap around her shaking from. It pulled her more snugly against him. Looking up at him, she placed both of her hands on either side of his face. Gently, she guided his face to hers and brushed her lips against his. She felt him shudder a little and try to pull her closer.

Tony

Tony sighed at the scene in front of him, while he didn't exactly like the scene that was playing out in front of him could no longer deny the feelings between his daughter and Strange. He didn't have to be magic to feel it. Pepper was right and it was better than her being with Toby (vomit). At least this way he knew that she was with somebody that could truly understand her and appreciate her.

He knew that she would be well cared for and that was all that he could ask for.
Irena

Letting out a small huff, Irena rubbed the side of her head. Currently, she found herself in Stephen’s study staring at the disaster that it was. Stephen told her that it hadn’t properly been cleaned since before the previous master controlled the Sanctum. The place looked like a tornado blew through it. Considering that he had no hot clue WHAT was actually in his own study, she asked him if she could start cleaning it up for him thinking she might be able to find more information on The Guardians or The Dragon’s Tear. Thankfully, he agreed and told her he would be up to help her after he finished looking for information in the library with Wong.

Looking around, she tried to decide where the hell to start. There were papers and books strewn all over the place. She eventually decided that his desk would be the best place to start so she had a clean place to organize everything. Fishing her iPod from her pants pocket, she picked a song and got to work. As she worked, she recalled the events of yesterday. With the state of mind she was in, she had no what would have happened if Bucky and Darcy hadn’t shown up when they did. She probably would have done something obscenely stupid that she would have regretted big time. She still couldn't believe that she came out of that drama without losing Tony or Stephen. Thank god and heaven for Pepper. After everybody got back to the tower safely, Tony explained to her what Pepper what told him. She was so, so grateful that Pepper had been able to help him understand. Pepper was right, she could have ended up with Toby who treated her like complete garbage and gave her a concussion. Remembering Stephen’s anger at that situation, she shuddered. That was probably something she would never ever forget.

Not liking where her train of thought was headed, she decided to switch to thinking about better subject matter. She thought about the agreement she and Tony came up with about the 'mechanic thing' as it was now dubbed. It turned out that Tony had hired somebody that she actually knew. Back she first became his mechanic it was very overwhelming for her, so Tony ended up trying to hire her help which ended up being a giant fail even though she really did try to make it work. Tony hired a mutant named Courtney who was actually not a bad mechanic but she ended up being more invested in using her mutation to influence every guy she came across into getting with her instead of doing any actual work.

Imagine her shock when she found out that he actually re-hired her to replace her while she was gone. It was no wonder Bucky came to her to get his arm fixed. She was beyond shocked more of the guys hadn't tried to come to her and get their stuff fixed. She loved Tony with all her heart but holy crap sticks could he be a bit blocked-headed at times. She supposed she could understand he had probably been desperate and she technically knew the ropes but still anybody but her. She had been so shocked when he told her that she felt her magic go sort of haywire thank crap Stephen had been there with her to keep her calm. In the end, She, Tony and Stephen had agreed to just let
whoever wanted her to fix their stuff for them to just come to the Sanctum and she would do it. Tony even let her take more tools with her which made her extremely happy.

She was suddenly shaken out of her thoughts by Sapphire shuffling around Stephen's desk and she couldn't help but give the tiny dragon an exasperated look. She supposed Sapphire thought that she was 'helping'. Singing to herself, she continued to separate and reorganize all kinds of different papers and books. Halfway through her efforts, she came across a big book on magical bonds which she thought looked pretty interesting and something she would be surely looking through at a later date. Thinking about how fast she bonded with Stephen, she knew that there had to be some kind of magical high jinks going on because it was ridiculously strong for such a short period of time. She set it aside and continued to sift through the papers until she came across a weird looking brown leather bound book.

'What in the hell is this?' She wondered.

She wondered if it wasn't some kind of diary. Looking at it more closely, she realized that it was in fact a diary. She decided that it either had to belong to Stephen or the previous master of the Sanctum. She hoped Stephen would join her shortly so she could show it to him. She continued to sort until she could sense him getting closer to her. Finally, he entered his study and wasted no time in approaching her. He entered her personal space and placed a soft, lingering kiss on her lips which she enjoyed thoroughly. He parted from her slowly.

"Have you found anything?" He asked curiously.

She nodded.

"Mmm, yes, take a look at this." She said and handed him the diary. "Does it look familiar to you?"

She watched him examine the diary thoroughly.

"Hmm, I can't say that it does. It must have belonged to the previous Master of the Sanctum." He replied.

She looked at the diary a little uncertainly.

"Should we…should we open it?" She asked uncertainly.

Stephen shrugged at her.

"Well, I don't think the previous Master of the Sanctum can do anything about it now if you know what I mean." He replied.

She chewed at her lips, Stephen did have a point but it just felt creepy to snoop in someone else's private stuff.

"Okay, you're right." She agreed eventually.

Diary in hand, he slid behind her and sat in his chair. She cuddled up next to him and looked on curiously as he opened the diary. It took them no time at all to realize that it wasn't really a diary at all but some sort of lexicon. Looking at it closely, it appeared to be a lexicon of all of the relics in the Sanctum.

'Well, I'll be damned!' She thought with intrigue.

She could sense that Stephen was also intrigued. She watched him flip through it until he came
across an entry about the cloak of levitation. He looked over it briefly before continuing on flipping through the book. Clearly, he was looking for something and she had a feeling that she knew what it was. Sure enough, there was an entry for the Dragon's tear. There were even pictures. He read the entry out loud.

"**Dragon's Tear:** The only 'relic of the guardians' left in existence. Not only is it sentient but it seems to show some intelligence as well. It seems to have a built in defence mechanism, it will burn anybody who it deems unworthy of handling it. It amplifies the magic of the user; it also allows the user to transform into a dragon. The level of transformation may vary depending on how much the user has tapped into the magic of the Dragon's tear. Only the 'Descendant of the Guardians' can unlock the full potential of the relic. Only sorcerers that the 'Descendant of the Guardians' deems worthy can handle the relic without being burned." He read.

Well, that was interesting and far more informative than anything they've found so far so that was good but still no info on the Guardians. They would have to keep on looking through all of the stuff in his study. She also wondered about that defence mechanism too. She supposed it was a good thing considering that if the relic ended up in the wrong hands the whole entire universe could go to hell in a handbasket. Perhaps she could convince Stephen to test it out with her.

Just as she was about to voice that idea to Stephen, his phoned chimed repeatedly from somewhere underneath all of the piles of books and papers she made. After a few minutes of searching, he came up victorious and found it. Opening his phone, he read the text messages and blanched in a way that she never witnessed before. She also felt his emotions go all haywire too.

'What in the hell is going on?' She wondered.

"What's wrong?" She asked, worried.

When he didn't answer her right way, she gently tilted his arm so she could see what the texts said. She was shocked to see they were from Christine and suddenly understood what was happening. Gently, Stephen shook his wrist free so she wouldn't see what they said. She knew that he was trying to save her some stress but she saw what one of them said anyway. She was basically asking him if there was any chance for them at all. While she knew that she had Stephen completely, she couldn't stop a bunch of icky feelings from erupting in the pit of her stomach. Sensing them, Stephen gave her a reassuring look and stroked her messy hair back tenderly.

"You know that I am yours." He murmured reassuringly, kissing her temple.

"Mmm, I know. But she does deserve closure and so do you. Go and call her." She advised softly.

He gave her an affectionate look.

"You are beyond perfect." He intoned.

"Oh I know, now go call her. I will be waiting here for you." She said cheekily.

Reluctantly, Stephen exited her personal space to do as she said and she went back to sorting papers. As she sorted through various papers and books, with Sapphire helping of course, she could feel Stephen's emotions changing rapidly. She knew that it wouldn't be easy on him to lose the last piece of his old life but at this point he had to do it in order to move on good and properly. She knew what it was like to try and let go of something that was so apart of her life that she thought she couldn't live without it at one point. It hurt and sucked and she would be there for him any way that she could. Soon, she became too distracted by Stephen's emotions to sort any longer they were just too strong, such awful sadness. She could also feel some relief bleeding through and she could understand that,
it meant that both he and Christine could move on. Stephen finally re-entered the study and he looked emotionally drained. She watched him approach his chair and slide down into it. He placed his head in his hands.

She knew that she had to do SOMETHING to comfort him; she approached him slowly and let out a yelp of surprise when he yanked her hard against himself. She was nestled gently between his legs and he buried his face into her shoulder. She could feel her shirt becoming damp and her heart clenched painfully. She tried to comfort him any way she could. She wrapped her arms around him and cooed to him softly. She was relieved to feel that it helped a lot. Raising one of her hands to his head, she stroked his hair softly and he let out a contented noise from the back of his throat. After a few more minutes, she felt his emotions return mostly to normal and he pulled back from her slightly. He looked at her very intensely and she could feel how grateful he was. Weaving his hand through her perpetually messy hair, he guided her lips to his and gave her a tender kiss. The emotions behind it were staggering to her. When oxygen became a necessity, they broke apart both panting a little.

"Thank you." He said sincerely.

"Anytime." She smiled.

Suddenly, what was left of the moment was effectively ruined by sapphire jumping on her head trying to escape the clutches of Stephen's cloak yet again. The cloak continued to try and swat at Sapphire. She couldn't help the exasperated sigh that escaped her.

"Can't we all just get along here for like 3 seconds?" She asked in exasperation.

Stephen laughed outright at her predicament and she stuck her tongue out at him.

"Gee thanks for the help here you jerk." She said in mock irritation.

Finally, she managed to shoo away Sapphire and the cloak. Pretending to be mad at Stephen, she blew him a raspberry and faced away from him. Mock ignoring him, she started sorting through papers and books once more.

"Oh how cute, I made her mad at me, let's see how long that lasts." He purred.

She bit her lip, when said things in that tone of voice it drove her crazy. She forced herself to stay facing away from him. She felt him approach her from behind. He was so close to her that she could feel his breath next to her ear.

'Oh holy hell almighty!' She thought to herself.

She bit back a moan as he placed his lips on her pulse point. He knew exactly what to do to drive her nuts and it wasn't fair at all. He kissed his way up her neck and nipped at her ear playfully. She felt his hands stroke along her hips; they stopped briefly at the hem of her shirt before disappearing underneath. Not expecting him to push it that far, she let out a shocked squeak and nearly dropped the book she was holding onto her foot.

Suddenly, she felt something shift in her magic. She felt the familiar pull of the Dragon's Tear calling to her. It was so strong that she actually heard it calling to her.

"Come to me." It said.

She couldn't help but obey it. Dropping the book she held in her hands, she stepped away from Stephen and left his study. She could hear Stephen calling to her but she couldn't for the life of her answer him back. She had to get to the relic room. It was like she wasn't in control of her own body
anymore and it scared the crap out of her. She could sense that Stephen was following her. Entering
the relic room, she stopped in front of the glass case that held the Dragon’s Tear in it and reached out
to it. Suddenly, a larger hand reached out to stop her and that was enough to break the trance. Just
what in the HELL was happening to her?

She looked at Stephen with fear written all over features.

"What is happening to me?" She asked, fear lacing her words.

"The relic is calling to you sweetheart. It will keep calling to you until you accept it now." He
explained.

"I don't think I'm strong enough to wield it though." She said softly.

"Of course you are. It's meant for you." He reassured.

To prove his point, he removed he glass covering the relic and she looked at him like he grew a
couple of extra heads.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" She squeaked.

"Trust me." He replied.

Gently, he nudged her in the direction of the relic. It sat harmlessly on a red velvet type pillow
looking back at her. She could sense that it was begging her to pick it up. Gathering up every ounce
of courage she had. She reached out to touch it. She could feel the magic pulsing from it and it was
like nothing she ever felt before. Before she could touch it, it began to overwhelm her and she pulled
back.

Suddenly, she could hear the voice of the Ancient One trying to comfort her.

_Fear not my sweet child, you are meant for this._

But she was scared, what if she couldn't wield this thing properly and hurt someone?

**Stephen**

Watching Irena step back from the relic, he let out a sigh. He could feel her fear and knew that she
was becoming overwhelmed. He couldn't blame her; this was just so much for her to deal with. His
poor sweet little kitten, he decided that she had enough he placed the glass back over the relic. He
knew that when she was ready, she would be able to wield it. In the meantime, there had to be a way
to help her along the way. Right now though, he could sense that she was emotionally exhausted just
like he was and knew that they both needed a break. He knew exactly he wanted to do. They hadn't
been able to spend any time together as a couple apart from the teasing because of everything that
was going on and he wanted to change that.

Suddenly, he got a great idea. He knew that Irena seemed to be the most calm when she was
cooking. Perhaps they could cook some dinner together? He could sense her hunger and knew that
she would enjoy that idea.

"Sweetheart, would you like to cook up some dinner?" He asked curiously.

"I know you are hungry." He added.

He watched her mismatched eyes light up and she nodded.
"You have no clue how much I would love that right about now." She said happily.

He smiled back warmly at her.

"Good, what would you like to make?" He asked her.

He watched her think hard for a moment.

"How about chicken fried rice, does that work for you?" She asked him back.

He nodded.

"Sounds good to me." He agreed.

Placing a hand on her lower back, he led her out of the relic room and to the kitchen. They entered the kitchen and he watched her waste no time in getting to work. She began to gather all the ingredients and supplies for chicken fried rice. Every time she couldn't reach an ingredient, he would get it for her which he enjoyed doing immensely. He could sense that she was relaxing and that made him very happy. He watched her start to combined ingredients in the wok on the stove and watched at how well she handled it considering her height. She seemed to sense what he was thinking and gave him a look. He had the decency to look a little sheepish.

He continued to hand her ingredients and they talked about random things it was all very comforting. After the food was made, he used his magic to serve it and she watched him fascination as he did so. He enjoyed that very much. They both sat down at the little table at the far end of the kitchen and began to enjoy their meal. He watched with fascination at how well she could use chopsticks. It made him wish that he could still use them that well but with his hands the way they were, it was impossible.

She seemed to realize what he was thinking and tried to help him re-learn how to use them. It was honestly the best 'date' he ever had until Wong came and interrupted everything. For the first time ever, he could have happily punched him in the face.

Even thought it had been interrupted, he considered the 'date' to be a successful one. He got to enjoy some time with Irena and she had calmed down considerably. As he helped her clean everything up, he sensed that she was beginning to become fatigued and needed to sleep. He told her as much.

"You need sleep." He stated.

As if to prove his point she let out a large yawn. She rubbed at her eyes too.

"I know just let me finish with this." She mumbled.

He nodded. He helped her finish up and led her out of the kitchen. He walked to the second floor of the sanctum in companionable silence. As she made to turn in the direction of her room he stopped her and she looked at him questioningly.

"Stay with me?" He didn't want to sound needy but he knew he wouldn't be able to sleep properly without her.

She seemed to sense this and agreed readily.

"Always." She murmured.

He knew he couldn't have it any other way now.
Okay one more for now and then I have to back to work on a new chapter for this story. Don't worry I will try to put up more of the story in a bit!

Irena

Suddenly, Irena's phone started blaring 'I am Iron Man' by Black Sabbath and it caused her to startle awake. Groping around for a moment, she found it and silenced it. For a moment, she sat in a sleep filled daze until she realized what she just did. She realized that she just accidentally hung up on Tony. Oh CRAP! Reluctantly, she de-tangled herself from Stephen (much to his extreme discontent) and pushed Sapphire off of her head. She managed to pluck her phone off of Stephen's night table and get a good and proper look at it. She was shocked to see all kinds of missed texts and a couple missed calls too. She wondered why suddenly so many people were trying to talk to her. Looking at the date in the corner of her phone, she blanched and her eyes widened comically. Today was her birthday and she had been so busy with everything that had been happening lately that she plum forgot that it was coming up. She almost forgot her own damn birthday. Sensing her fluctuating emotions, Stephen turned and faced her. He was looking at her with a mix of confusion and worry.

"Sweetheart, whatever is the matter?" He asked curiously.

She looked at him sheepishly.

"Um, today's my birthday and I almost forgot about it." She explained.

Stephen smiled at her affectionately and let out a chuckle.

"That sounds about right." He said jokingly, causing her to mock glare at him.

"Oh gee thanks so much for that." She pouted and pretended to turn away from him.

"Come here, birthday girl." He growled playfully.

He reached out and snaked an arm around her waist and gently guided her so she was nestled between his legs. Sapphire wasted no time in crawling over to her lap and making herself comfortable. Letting out a soft contented sigh, she nuzzled deeper into Stephen's chest and stroked Sapphire's scaly little head. She and Stephen lounged in a comfortable silence until her phone went off again and she knew that it was Tony. She sighed, she knew that he wouldn't stop calling until she answered her phone. Opening up her phone, she tapped the answer call button.

"Good morning, Tony." She answered.

"Hey kiddo, I don't know what's more appalling the fact that you hung up on me or the fact that you've forgotten your own birthday." Tony joked.

"Gee thanks Tony, because I did it on purpose." She said with mock irritation.

She could hear Tony's laugh filtering through the phone.
"Say, you wouldn't want to drop by the tower with merlin later would you? I want to put on a birthday party for you like old times." Tony asked curiously.

Oh good lord, did Tony just call Stephen merlin? She fought to keep a straight face that was just too funny.

"Sure Tony, I'm pretty sure that could be arranged." She replied, holding back a snort of laughter.

"Excellent! I'll see you guys later then!" Tony exclaimed happily.

"Sure thing, Tony." She agreed.

Still trying to keep her laughter at bay, she bid Tony goodbye and hung up the phone. She turned to Stephen and could not contain her laughter any longer. She burst out laughing and Stephen looked at her with mock annoyance.

"Merlin? Oh that is just too hilarious!" She laughed.

"Oh you think so eh?" He growled playfully.

He wasted no time in tickling her mercilessly; she let out a high pitched squeal and tried to swat away his hands to no avail.

"Argh!" She yelled breathlessly.

"Do you surrender?" He purred in her ear.

"Okay, okay! I surrender!" She exclaimed.

"Good girl." He murmured, placing a tender kiss on the spot right under her ear.

"Mmm." She sighed softly.

She let out a contented noise and snuggled back into Stephen's chest. She resumed stroking Sapphire's scaly head.

"So, what would the birthday girl like to do today?" He asked curiously.

As she thought about that, her stomach let out a huge unladylike growl which caused her to blush profusely and Stephen to let out a chuckle.

'Well that answered that question.' She thought to herself.

"Alright, how about let's eat some breakfast first." He laughed.

She nodded in agreement. Reluctantly, she detangled herself from Stephen and got up to get ready for the day. After giving a command to Sapphire to go play, she went and picked out what clothes she wanted to wear for the day. Since last time Stephen asked her to stay with him, she had begun to gradually start moving her things into his room which he didn't seem to mind. It made things so much easier considering she either ended up coming to him every night or just ended up staying with him anyway. She thought about what to wear for a moment and then decided on just throwing her work out clothes on. She thought it would be a good idea to get in some practice with trying to summon her spells during combat. If she was going to try and wield the Dragon's tear anytime soon she thought she would be better versed in that stuff. She turned to voice that idea to Stephen and the scene she was greeted with made her laugh out loud. Stephen sitting on the bed trying to keep Sapphire from crawling all over his face and head, when she said go play this was not what she had
"Sapphire cut it out!" She laughed.

Sapphire obeyed and left the room, presumably to go find and chase the cloak. She shook her head at the thought.

"Thank you, that little dragon of yours is the spawn from hell." He joked.

"Oh come on, she isn't THAT bad! Say, what do you think about having a sparring lesson today? I want to get better versed in summoning my weapons during combat." She explained.

She watched Stephen mull the idea over in his head and he nodded.

"That sounds like a great idea actually." He agreed smiling warmly at her.

"Good." She said, smiling back at him.

With her workout clothes in hand, she disappeared into the bathroom to change and brush her teeth. While there was a lot of things that she had become more comfortable doing around Stephen, changing was one she was still working on. Unfortunately, when she and Toby were together one of things he liked to do was nit-pick at her body. While they never went 'all the way' as it was put, they went far enough where he did see most of her body. It wreaked havoc on her self-esteem. She knew that Stephen would never ever do anything like that but it was still hard to get over. Letting out a soft sigh, she banished those thoughts from her mind and got to brushing her teeth and changing her clothes. After throwing her hair into a messy braid, she decided she was ready enough for now. She would get ready better later before she and Stephen went to the tower.

Exiting the bathroom, she was not prepared for the sight that greeted her. Stephen was in the middle of changing his clothes. Obviously, he had the same idea about getting ready better later that she did. He got the pants part done but he was in middle of putting his tunic on. She blushed magenta up to her hairline. Clearly all of that sparring and training at Kamar-Taj did him a lot of good, holy sweet freaking god. Her mouth opened and closed repeatedly as she tried to find her words. It took Stephen no time at all to know that she was standing in the bathroom door way possibly because of her wayward emotions. Seeing her in the doorway, he placed his tunic on the bed and smirked at her in a way that turned her legs to jelly. He approached her slowly and deliberately. He lifted his hand to her face and stroked down her jaw gently.

"So innocent." He purred.

He guided her lips to his in a searing kiss. She couldn't help the noise that erupted from the back of her throat which caused him to let out a low growl. He let his hands run down her bare shoulders and then stroke along her back. She let a surprised squeak when they cupped her ass to guide her closer to him. Gaining some courage, she let her small hands explore his chest a little; she ran them along his bare ribs causing his growl to deepen. He broke the kiss looking at her with darkened, desire filled eyes.

"Little minx, you play with fire. You better stop before you make me do something I won't quite regret but you aren't ready for." He growled.

She looked away from him a little sheepishly and he gently forced her to look back at him.

"You have nothing to be embarrassed about sweetheart, you are beautiful. Now go, I will be along shortly." He reassured.
He gave her one last gentle kiss and gave her ass a gentle swat to get her moving in the direction of the door way. She looked at him with shock at the gesture; she could not believe he just did that. He merely gave her a boyish grin back.

"Go." He repeated.

She finally complied and left. Rubbing her ass in the spot where he swatted as she did so. She still couldn't believe he just did that.

**Stephen**

He watched his minx leave the room rubbing her ass where he swatted at it. He could not believe how far that went; he got dangerously close to losing control. Her gentle little hands running down his ribs almost un-did him but knew that he had to be careful. Her reaction at his shirtlessness told him all that he needed to know. She was still so innocent. He had to be so careful not to push too hard too fast but when she touched him like that it made it almost damn near impossible. It was compounded by the fact that she really had no idea what she was doing to him. He shook out of those thoughts before they got too dangerous. He had to think of something to calm his body down. Instantly, an image of Wong parading around the library naked popped into his mind and he shuddered.

'Well, that worked.' He thought with disgust.

He quickly shook that nasty thought out of his mind. After he finished getting dressed, he cleaned his teeth and fixed his hair. He exited his room and went to go find where Irena had gone, he could sense her in the kitchen. He entered the kitchen and was greeted with the most glorious sight. Irena was on her stool, humming along to some song that she most likely had stuck in her head. She was cutting up fruit and feeding it to that little hell spawn she called a pet. He couldn't help think that she was beautiful and HIS. He still didn't know where the possessiveness was coming from but he still suspected it had something to do with their magic; it was something he would have to look into at a later date. He approached her and wrapped his arm around her waist.

"Hello, beautiful." He murmured into her ear, nibbling at it playfully as he did so.

"Mmm hello to you too, ready for breakfast?" She asked curiously.

"Hello, beautiful." He murmured into her ear, nibbling at it playfully as he did so.

"Mmm hello to you too, ready for breakfast?" She asked curiously.

He nodded and helped her get the fruit and toast together. They both knew that eating a heavy meal before sparring was a bad idea so fruit and toast was a good choice. He magicked the food the little table in the corner of the kitchen. He watched her dismiss Sapphire and they both went to sit at the table. They enjoyed their breakfast in a companionable silence. He couldn't help but watch her a little bit when she wasn't looking. He couldn't believe how lucky he was that she decided to stay with him. He would never ever forget that day she almost left for good, she had been so close to doing it too. He knew that all she needed was somebody to just BE there for her and that he wanted to step up and be that for her. He was so glad that he did and she stayed. The thought of her leaving made a large emotional ripple run through him that he tried to keep hidden from her. Luckily, she seemed to busy eating to notice.

After He and Irena finished up with breakfast, they cleaned up together and made their way to the 'practice room'. He set up the room to his liking while she stretched out a little. When he sense that she was done, he approached her.

"Are you ready for me?" He growled playfully.

She gave him a winning smirk back.
"You better believe I am." She snarked playfully.

He wasted no time in coming after her. He was pleased to see how much she improved since he first sparred with her. She was much faster and her movements were much more precise. He knew that very soon that she would become faster than him and that was what he was hoping for. He decided that now was the time to summon a weapon, what she needed was to work on how long it took too her to summon one or anything for that matter. She could never get it on the first time and he had to work on that with her. At the rate she was going, she would be dead before she could summon a weapon to protect herself with. He summoned a blade and he watched her eyes get large for a moment before she tried to summon her fans. As always, it took her a few tries and she had to dodge a few blows but she managed to summon them. He looked at her with pride when she managed to fend off his incoming blow with her fans.

"You are getting so much better your summoning." He complimented, smiling at her warmly.

"Mmm, thank you. It pays to have a good teacher." She said, returning his smile.

He dismissed his blade and watched her dismiss her fans. He let out a warm chuckle and entered her personal space. He stroked her messy head and placed a warm kiss on her temple.

"You better be careful what you tell me, kitten. You might cause my ego to overinflate." He joked.

He watched her roll her mismatched eyes and let out a musical laugh.

"I think it might be too late for that." She joked back.

He merely laughed back at her and continued to stroke the top her head thoughtfully.

"Why don't you go get ready to go the tower, birthday girl? I have something I have to go take care of. If I'm not ready to go when you are, feel free to go to the tower without me and it will catch up." He suggested.

He watched her give him a curious look but she knew better than to ask him what he had to take care of because he knew that she knew that he wouldn't tell her anyway. He gave her one last gentle kiss and nudged her toward the door. He had a birthday present to get together. He had a great idea and order for him to execute it, she needed to be occupied. After a little more coaxing, he finally got her to leave the room.

_Irena_

She left the room reluctantly, wondering just what in the heck he had planned. Sometimes his plans scared the shit out of her. Shaking her head, she forced herself to let her thoughts go knowing there was nothing that she could about whatever Stephen was planning. Heading to Stephen's bedroom, she began to get ready to go to the tower. She stripped out of her workout clothes and hopped in the shower. As she got cleaned up, she thought about what happened this morning. She couldn't help but flush at the memory of Stephen topless. That whole entire moment caused her blood to boil in such a good way. She also couldn't believe he had the gall to slap her on the ass! The worst part of it was that she liked it, a lot. She forced herself to let go of those thoughts and what they entailed for now. She turned the shower off and exited it. She wrapped a towel around herself. After towel drying her hair, she cleaned her teeth again and exited it the bathroom with the towel wrapped around her securely. She knew that Stephen would not be in the room and didn't have to be worried about him catching her.

Looking through her clothes, she picked up her _Black Sabbath_ shirt because she knew that it was
Tony's favorite. She threw on her favorite pair of skinny jeans, found a pair of the clean socks and put on her Doc Martins. It was her birthday and she was going to be comfortable, dammit. She went back into the bathroom briefly to tame her messy curls and put on a bit of makeup. Just enough to bring out her features like Darcy taught her. Deciding that she looked good enough, she grabbed her phone and sling ring and left the bedroom. She made her way to the foyer to open a portal.

Half way there, she felt a small tug on her pant leg and looked down to see Sapphire looking at her expectantly. She bent down and scratched her scaly head. She knew that this party was no place for her. There was no telling what was going to happen.

"Sapphire, this party is no place for a tiny dragon like you. Why don't you go and find the cloak to play with?" She suggested softly.

The suggestion seemed to do the trick and Sapphire bounded off causing her to laugh.

Putting the sling ring on, she pictured Tony's bar and executed the movements to open a portal. To her relief, it worked and she stepped into it. She came out on the other side in the middle of Tony's bar. Immediately, she was assaulted by several different people at once. All of which were male. Just as she managed to extricate herself the rib crushing embrace she knew to be Thor, she was scooped up by another person who succeeded in crushing the ribs that Thor hadn't already crushed.

"Hey Tootsie roll, long time no see!" The voice said.

She recognized the voice to belong Clint. She considered him to be a big brother she never had just like Steve, Bucky and Thor. He certainly had the knack of pissing her off like one anyway. He let her go and then deliberately messed up her hair.

"Oh thanks a lot jackass like I don't have enough trouble trying to fix my hair!" She groused.

He merely laughed and messed it up more which caused her to flip him off.

"So, how have you been? I have to say everyone was pretty pissed to learn that Tony whisked you away from the tower without letting us even say goodbye first." Clint said.

She sighed; she knew that conversation was going to come up fast.

"It was actually for my own good and it's helped I don't blow crap up anymore no thanks to Stephen." She laughed.

At the mention of Stephen, all of her 'brothers' got an interesting gleam in their eyes which quite honestly scared the crap right out of her.

"Say, where even is Strange?" Steve asked curiously.

"Yes, I would very much like to meet the man who as managed to court my most stubborn little sister." Thor agreed.

She couldn't help start turning an interesting shade of red. She couldn't believe how fast word traveled through the tower. She really didn't want to stick around and watch them interrogate him. She could only imagine what a sight that would be.

"I'm not too sure, he said he had something to take care off and that he would be along shortly." She Shrugged.

The four men looked at her curiously and she fought not to roll her mismatched eyes.
"I'm sure he'll be along shortly for you all to interrogate. Right now, I'm going to find a beer." She snarked.

Leaving her 'brothers' to their own devices, she went to locate an alcoholic beverage. Halfway to Tony's bar, she saw Vision and stopped to say hello to him briefly. He was so very shy but so very nice. After finishing up talking to Vision, she reached the bar and was happy to see Darcy, Wanda and Natasha already at the bar talking, Darcy noticed her first.

"Happy Birthday, girlfriend!" Darcy exclaimed, reaching out to give her a hug.

Both Wanda and Natasha also hugged her and wished her a happy birthday. She went around the bar to retrieve a beer and a bottle opener. She opened the bottle and took a good slug of the amber liquid inside.

"So." Natasha started. "Where is this boyfriend of yours?"

She inwardly let out a groan, of course they knew about the whole thing too.

"Yeah, I heard he is quite lovely to look at." Wanda added.

She turned to Darcy and gave her the stink eye and she had the decency to look sheepish.

"Um, sorry?" She said, not really sounding sorry at all.

She rolled her eyes and answered the question.

"I actually don't know. He went to go take care of something and said the he would be along shortly." She explained.

Darcy, Natasha and Wanda gave her a look but accepted the answer. All four of them talked about random things until she could feel something in her magic shift and knew Stephen would be arriving shortly. Sure enough, a portal appeared in the center of the lounge part of the bar and Stephen stepped through portal looking handsome as ever. He had on pair of black dress pants and a crisp white dress shirt. His hair was combed perfectly in place. She couldn't help but stare and she knew that Darcy, Wanda and Natasha were staring too.

"My god you are one lucky bitch." Wanda muttered.

Darcy and Natasha both made a noise of agreement.

"Don't look now, but here comes the crazy big brother patrol." Natasha laughed.

Clint, Steve and Thor all went to go greet Stephen and 'talk to him' she saw that Bucky opted out possibly because he interrogated him already. She watched with fascination they began to interrogate him. At first it seemed that he was holding his own, but she could sense that he was starting to get uncomfortable. It was starting to get uncomfortable to watch.

"Wow, I think you should go and bail him out now." Darcy suggested.

She agreed, she left her beer on the bar counter and went to go rescue Stephen.

"Hey guys, I think you've scarred him enough for now." She laughed.

She could sense that Stephen was extremely grateful for her interruption.

"Thank you." He whispered into her ear.
"Awww come on! We were playing nice!" Clint whined.

She rolled her eyes.

"The hell you were, I know what your definition of nice can be." She said cheekily.

Suddenly, Tony appeared out of nowhere interrupting whatever smartass comment Clint was going to respond with.

"Hey, Merlin." He said to Stephen causing everybody to snicker.

She watched as Stephen sent Tony a glare at the nickname that he ignored.

"Come on, let's let the birthday girl come and open her presents!" He exclaimed happily, it was very clear he found his way into the alcohol. She couldn't help but snicker a little.

"Sure, Tony." She said.

She let herself be led by Tony to a couch in the lounge. She sat down with Stephen on her left and Tony on her right. After everybody else sat around her, Pepper brought in a pile of gifts and Pepper started handing them to her. She opened the ones from her 'brothers' first. She got a bunch of new band shirts from Clint, a new portable PS Vita game system from Steve and Bucky (how they managed to pick it out she did not know) which she was very happy about. Having been in an orphanage half her life and not one to actually ask for or buy anything like that for herself, it was a really nice surprise. She was shocked when Thor dropped a giant book in her lap. He told her that since she was learning magic, an Asgardian spell book might be a nice change to learn from. She thanked him profusely; she couldn't wait to open it up later.

Next, she got gifts that she knew were from Natasha and Wanda. She was happy to get all kinds of organic bath products. By the look on both of their faces, she had an idea of what they wanted her to use them for. Shaking her head, she moved onto Darcy's gift. She was shocked to see her pull a guitar from behind her back. It was all black, and had beautiful, intricate gold vines looked as if they were weaving themselves through the strings of the guitar. It was all custom made just for her. She actually had it given to her long ago but somebody very important to her who died long ago. She tried get rid of it in an attempt to rid herself of some of the grief she felt over the whole entire situation. How Darcy found it, she did not know. Even though she was slightly sad at some of the memories it brought. She WAS happy that Darcy managed to find it and told her so. She gave Darcy a huge hug and accepted the next gift.

The next gift was from Tony and Pepper, it was a giant photo album. She opened it and started looking through it; she was shocked to see photos that she didn't even think existed anymore. She wondered how Tony and Pepper managed to find them all. She could feel Stephen looking at them over her shoulder. She could feel Stephen's curiosity. She continued to look until she came across one clearly from her punk days when she was around 15. She was with a boy who was just as punked out as she was. The picture pulled at her heartstrings.

"Oh, Charlie." She thought sadly.

She had no idea how Tony and Pepper found the picture. She thought she had gotten rid of all of the pictures of Charlie. When she was 15, she was going through a hell of a phase. She went to all sorts of raves (she snuck in with a fake id) and go into all sorts of shit. At one such rave, she bumped into Charlie and they struck up a friendship. It turned out he got adopted not long after she did. But sometimes, no matter hard you try to pair up the right kid with the right parents it just doesn't work out. This was what happened to poor Charlie. The parents who adopted him were straight laced and
very Christian and tried to mold Charlie into the perfect son. It didn't work and he acted out. He
started dressing in dark clothes, doing drugs and going to raves, she bumped into him at one such
rave and they started hanging out.

He started coming over a lot, he would teach her guitar or they would watch movies, go to raves or
just hang out in central park. One night, he came over with some kind of drugs, she couldn't
remember what they were, he offered her some but she was too much of a coward to actually do it.
Maybe it was mixing the drug with alcohol, she didn't know what happened but he never woke up
the next day. His adoptive parents blamed her for what happened. She couldn't even visit him in the
hospital to say goodbye or go to his funeral. That had possibly been the worst thing to ever happen to
her in her young life. After that, she got rid of all the pictures of him, and the guitar which at been a
present from him for her 16th birthday. She never spoke of the incident again after that.

Snapping out of her thoughts, she could see that everybody was looking at her with worry especially
Stephen and she assured everybody that she was fine and it was just an errant bad memory. Tony
and Pepper knew better and so did Stephen but nobody said anything thankfully.

After calming down some, she watched Stephen pull something out of his pants pocket and drop it
into her hand. It was a little velvet pouch. This was the gift that she had been waiting for. It pulsed
magically in her hand and she instantly knew what it was. She looked at Stephen with shock. How
had he managed to pick it up without being burned? It must have determined that she thought him
worthy of touching it. She opened it up and sure enough the Dragon's Tear fell into the center of her
palm. She was shocked. She turned to Stephen who was looking at her intensely.

"It's yours now, sweetheart." He said softly.

"Happy Birthday." He added, giving her a soft kiss.

She could feel everybody's eyes on her but she could not bring herself to care. He broke the kiss and
gently picked up the necklace. He un-clasped it and placed it around her neck. She looked down at
the pulsing blue jewel and touched it softly. She could feel its magic merging with her own at it was
like nothing she ever felt before. But it didn't feel bad at all, it kind of felt right in a way.

"Thank you." She murmured, giving him another kiss, which he returned eagerly.

After a moment, she parted with him determined to find her beer or another one because she needed
a break from all the heavy emotions. After locating her beer, she turned back to go back to Stephen
and her family only to see a sight had had her hackles rising. Somehow, Courtney the blond bitch
had invited herself the party when her back was turned. She was reminded of why she hated
working with her and just being around her in general. She was trying to influence the guys with her
mutation again. She was reminded of something Darcy told her when she tried to use her damn
power to try and turn everybody against her. Darcy told her that she already influenced everybody so
much that the bitch's powers wouldn't work on anybody. She was beginning to think that she was
right. Looking at the scene in front of her, it made Courtney look like a giant tool in her opinion.

It was when she started going after Stephen that something shifted inside of her; Courtney was
flirting with him and touching him. It was clear that she was trying to use her powers on him. It didn't
matter that it was failing miserably. Her touching him alone was enough to set something off inside
of her. It must be the magical bond she shared with him.

She couldn't stop it. Her wayward emotions tapped into the relic that hung around her neck and she
was lost. She didn't even feel the bottle of beer slipping from her hand and shattering onto the floor.
This caused everybody to stop what they were doing and look at her in shock. As she moved
wards Courtney threateningly, she felt herself changing. Blue dragon wings exploded out of her
back, her eyes turned cat-like and started glowing blue. Her teeth grew into fangs which she bared threateningly at Courtney. She let out an un-holy, slightly distorted snarl that caused everybody to realize what was happening to her.

She made to lunge at Courtney. How DARE that bitch try to take her mate away from her!

Something stopped her however before she could, whatever it was wrapped around her and tried to stop her. It was Stephen's cloak; how it got there she didn't even know. She continued to snarl and growl trying to free herself.

At the same time, she heard a deep familiar soothing voice try to calm her down. She knew that it was Stephen.

Wasn't this like just like day one all over again.
To Unload a lot of Unwanted Baggage

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey y'all! Here is more of this story I am hoping to get all of it up here today (FINALLY!) so keep checking back!

Irena

Irena continued to snarl and thrash in the grip of the cloak wanting nothing more than to rip Courtney's stupid face right off. From day one that bitch had been making her life a living hell no matter what she tried to do to make it better and now she had the freaking gall to try and take Stephen away from her. She could hear both Stephen and Tony trying to talk to her but she couldn't focus on them to save her damn life. Her emotions were far too strong and the relic was far too tapped into them. In her half transformed state, all of her senses were greatly enhanced. Her instincts were driving her to want to eliminate what they perceived as a threat to her and her Mate. At this moment, she felt more dragon than human.

Suddenly, she felt large, warm hands cup both sides of her face. She knew that they belonged to Stephen. Gently, he forced her to look him in the eyes. She knew that he was trying to make her focus on him rather than her wayward emotions and instincts. Her enhanced sense of smell picked up his scent and she couldn't help the purr that erupted from her chest. He smelled spicy and masculine. She felt him begin to make sweeping motions on her cheek with his thumb. Between that and his scent, she felt herself finally begin to calm down some. She felt her focus begin to return and she could finally understand what he was trying to tell her too.

"Sweetheart, try to focus on my voice. Don't let the relic control you, you have to control the relic." He said soothingly.

She forced herself to listen to him. It was hard, but she finally felt herself start to disengage from the relic. Her eyes and teeth began to return to normal. She could feel that the wings were melting away from her back. Her instincts felt more human again but her senses were still a little messed up. She sincerely hoped that would clear up in time. Now that everything was mostly clear again, she could see that Stephen was now looking at her with relief instead of worry.

"That's my good girl." He murmured softly.

Now that she was calm again, her whole entire body began to feel like jelly. She felt the cloak loosen around her, she was thankful that it didn't completely un-wrap from her otherwise she would have ended up on the floor. She clung to Stephen and the cloak remained wrapped around her.

Eventually, she gained the courage to look at her family and she was thankful to see that they were more worried about her than what just transpired. She breathed a huge sigh of relief. Unfortunately, the relief she felt was short lived when Courtney opened her big fat mouth.

"I can't believe how much you all care about someone who is just such a giant FREAK!" She said waspishly.

Everybody in the room turned to look at her, not believing the words that just came out of her stupid
mouth. She visibly flinched at the word 'freak'. She hated that word. If she had a trigger word, that was it. Until she was adopted by Tony, she was called that word on a regular basis be it from Toby or almost every potential adopter who walked through that damn door. She would do SOMETHING that put them off, perhaps they could sense that something was off about her she didn't know but the end result would always be the same. Suddenly, she was snapped out of her thoughts when she was overcome by a weird feeling that had nothing to do with the relic hanging around her neck. It was same feeling she got whenever she went through a magically suppressed memory. Sure enough, she became momentarily unfocused as an unwanted memory hit her hard.

Memory

6 Year old Irena found herself huddled in a corner and older boys threw stones at her.

"Look at the stupid freak hiding in the corner!" They yelled and laughed.

One of the stones pelted her in the head and it caused her power to try and activate. She could sense the worry coming from the bullies. Suddenly, Mr. Mordo appeared from around the corner and told them get out or he would tell the Ancient One on them.

It seemed to work and they took off.

"Mr. Mordo am I a freak?" She asked sadly.

She watched Mr. Mordo seem to think on the most appropriate way to answer the question and that upset her. Shouldn't he just be saying no? He was looking at her weirdly too like something was off and she didn't know what.

"Are you okay Mr. Mordo?" She asked worriedly.

He was about to respond, when her 'mother' came around the corner. She ran to her and clung to her robes. She watched her seem to assess the situation in front of her. She seemed to sense something that couldn't yet.

"Come my sweet child; thank Mr. Mordo for rescuing you form those bullies whom I will talk to later. Let's go and leave him to go rest." She said.

She could sense that was trying to say something to give them an excuse to exit the room. It worked and both she and her 'mother' exited the room and left Mr. Mordo to his own devices. She couldn't help but wonder what the matter was but let it go for now. She looked at her 'mother' with sad eyes.

"Mother, am I a freak?" She asked sadly.

Her 'mother' gave her a soft look and stroked her messy hair.

"No my love, you are so very special." She said softly.

End Memory

Suddenly, she was torn from the memory and everything refocused. She really hated that stupid word. She could sense that both Stephen and Tony wanted to give Courtney a piece of their minds. Tony ended up beating Stephen to the punch.

"That FREAK as you just called her is my daughter. Who is a thousand times a better person than you can ever hope to be, I suggest you gather your shit and get out of my tower right now before I tell security to make you go bye, bye." Tony said.
Even though Tony's words came out kind of comically everybody in the room knew he was being dead serious. Except for Courtney who stood in place with her mouth flapping open and closed like a demented fish out of water.

"BYE, BYE!" Tony repeated loudly, making a shooing gesture towards her.

Finally, Courtney got the hint and left the room much to her relief. She didn't any other reason to accidentally lose control of the Dragon's Tear or hear the word 'freak' again and really she was one to freaking talk. She watched as Tony turned back to face her. He placed both hands on her shoulders and gave her a serious look.

"Kiddo, nobody is going to look you the wrong way if you wanna pack it in now or if you wanna continue with your party that's fine too it's your choice." Tony told her.

She thought for a moment on what to do. She really didn't want her party ruined because of that stupid bitch and she was having a really good time before everything happened. Plus, she knew that Tony and Pepper had a chocolate cake hidden somewhere for her that she wanted in on too so she decided continuing was the best way to go.

"I think that I would very much like to continue where we left off if that's okay with everybody." She said softly.

Everybody seemed happy with that idea but she could still sense some lingering tension in the room until Darcy suddenly broke it in the most Darcy-like way.

"Hey shithead, I sold half my soul to get you that guitar back and I would really like to hear you play it if that's alright with you." She joked.

Looking around, she saw that everybody seemed to be in agreement with Darcy. Even Stephen was looking down at her with curiosity (She had not fully parted from him yet). She knew that she was well and truly screwed.

"Alright, fine." She relented.

She reluctantly parted from Stephen even though it was the last thing that she really wanted to do and walked over to the lounge were all her gifts were. Stephen again sat down on her left side and after finding somebody to deal with the busted beer bottle on the floor, Tony took his place at her right side once again. Everybody surrounded her and looked at her curiously which made her nervous. She couldn't even believe she was doing this after she promised herself that she would never do it again. She picked up her guitar and practiced a few chords to get back into the swing of things. Charlie once told her playing the guitar was like learning how to ride a bike, once you learned you never forgot. She supposed that he was right. It didn't take her that long at all to re–familiarize herself with everything. As she tuned her guitar properly, she debated on what song to play. She decided that the song Iris by the Goo Goo Dolls would be her best bet. It was the first song that Charlie ever taught her and she knew it the best. She looked around at everybody and swallowed nervously. She decided that just jumping into it would be the best way to go. She started playing the familiar chords and singing along with them.

And I'd give up forever to touch you
'Cause I know that you feel me somehow
You're the closest to heaven that I'll ever be
And I don't want to go home right now

And all I can taste is this moment
And all I can breathe is your life
And sooner or later it's over
I just don't wanna miss you tonight

And I don't want the world to see me
'Cause I don't think that they'd understand
When everything's meant to be broken
I just want you to know who I am

And you can't fight the tears that ain't coming
Or the moment of truth in your lies
When everything feels like the movies
Yeah you bleed just to know you're alive

And I don't want the world to see me
'Cause I don't think that they'd understand
When everything's meant to be broken
I just want you to know who I am

And I don't want the world to see me
'Cause I don't think that they'd understand
When everything's meant to be broken
I just want you to know who I am

And I don't want the world to see me
'Cause I don't think that they'd understand
When everything's meant to be broken
I just want you to know who I am

I just want you to know who I am
I just want you to know who I am
I just want you to know who I am

After she finished, everybody clapped which caused her to blush a little. She knew that she had some serious rust but was proud of herself that she managed to get through the whole song and she knew that Charlie would be too. She could also sense that Tony and Pepper were pretty proud of her too for overcoming something she was pretty sure that she thought that she would never ever overcome. Suddenly, felt Stephen's hand sneak under the cloak that was still was wrapped around her and he started stroking along her back softly. She enjoyed it immensely. She looked up at him and he was looking at her intensely.

"You are amazing." He intoned softly.

He kissed her gently causing her 'brothers' to all start making gagging noises except for maybe Thor. Clint especially was putting on a show.

"Oh my god my beautiful eyes now all I'll be able to picture is Merlin sucking face with my baby sister." He whined, causing Natasha to give him a good swat to the back of his head.

"OUCH!" Clint protested.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

"What are you like 4 or something?" She griped.
She couldn't help the giggle that bubbled passed her lips at the whole scene. She couldn't help but laugh louder at the look at of complete outrage on Stephen's face at being forever branded with the nickname 'Merlin'. She turned to Stephen and gave him a sympathetic pat on the knee.

"Hey look at it this way; at least they aren't trying to kill you." She joked.

"Oh har, har." He replied, rolling his eyes.

She continued to laugh until her attention was drawn to the giant chocolate cake that Pepper wheeled into the lounge. She couldn't help but see that there were literally 23 candles all over the entire cake. With Tony being the giant goofball that he was, it didn't entirely shock her. It honestly looked a giant porcupine or something of the sort.

"Tony what even is this? How am I supposed to blow all of these candles out?" She asked curiously.

Tony merely grinned and shrugged at her.

Everybody started to sing happy birthday to her. After they finished, she tried to blow out all of the candles but ended up leaving behind ten.

"You have ten boyfriends!" Wanda yelled out causing her to face palm and everybody else to laugh.

After locating a knife, she began to cut and hand out pieces of cake. After she finished, she cut one for herself and began munching on it happily. Chocolate had always been her favorite since she could remember. After she finished her cake, she got up and went to spend a little more time with Darcy, Natasha and Wanda. Knowing that she was alright, the cloak disengaged from her and levitated over to Stephen. It was very weird to watch it levitating in place next to him.

She watched Stephen taking animatedly with Steve and Bucky. She was so happy to see him getting along with people that she considered to be her family. Even Tony seemed more at ease with her and Stephen. She could still sense some awkwardness whenever they displayed some affection but it was leaps and bounds better. Now that everything was calm, she began to really feel the after effects of her transformation. Everything hurt and she felt exhausted, she knew that it would be time to go back to the Sanctum soon. Stephen seemed to sense it too. She watched Stephen finish up his conversation with Steve and Bucky. He approached her with the cloak levitating behind him like an obedient puppy. She still didn't know how it got here in the first place but she was sure glad that that it did. He looked at her tenderly.

"You are exhausted." He stated.

She nodded in agreement.

"I know." She agreed.

She knew that it was time to go.

She her goodbyes to Darcy, Natasha and Wanda with the promise to visit more now that her powers weren't TOTALLY out of control. She hugged Steve and Bucky goodbye. She also tried to hug Clint goodbye but that resulted in him trying to mess up her hair some more which caused her to flip him off again. Before she could hug Thor, he got her first and gave her a bone crushing hug which just about knocked the wind right out of her. He also gave Stephen a hearty slap on the back which caused him suck in a breath. Thor really didn't know his own strength at the best of times. She also made sure to give Tony and Pepper each a hug goodbye. After she finished her goodbyes, she gathered all of her stuff and Stephen opened a portal. She stepped through the portal and nearly collapsed when they reached the other side.
Immediately, she was assaulted by Sapphire who was looking at her a way that told her 'you left me behind you bastards!' if it was even possible to have that expression on her tiny face.

"Oh Sapphire, everything is fine!" She laughed.

The tiny dragon turned her attention to Stephen's cloak and started growling and snapping at it. Clearly, according to Sapphire it was the cloak's entire fault that she was left behind. Sapphire wasted no time in chasing it from the foyer of the Sanctum where they were. She shook her head at the entire sordid display.

"I told you that dragon is the spawn from hell." He commented causing her to roll her mismatched eyes.

She let out a long yawn and Stephen gave her a soft look. He helped her get her gifts to his room and put them away. As he did this, she went and got ready for bed. She looked through her clothes and found Stephen's white shirt that she sort of took over since Toby gave her that concussion. She grabbed it and went to go to the bathroom to change into it.

**Stephen**

After watching Irena enter the bathroom to change, he also changed into his night clothes. He couldn't not believe what almost transpired tonight, he no idea how strong the Dragon's Tear could actually be. The transformation she underwent was like nothing that he ever saw before in his life. It was like she was literally half human and half dragon. How his cloak ended up where it did, he did not know but he was glad that it had been there. He wondered if her magic was strong enough to call it there. He would have to look into it at a later time.

He was suddenly shaken out of his thoughts when Irena exited the bathroom. He couldn't help but suck in a breath at the way she looked in his shirt. It reached just below her underwear, exposing all of her legs and a good portion of her creamy thighs. The shirt did little to hide her curves, which he found he liked very much. The shirt was so large on her that it kind of exposed her left shoulder which he also found he enjoyed. He could see the Dragon's Tear glowing softly just under the collar of the shirt. She kept her wild curls loose. She looked almost ethereal. He beckoned her to him and she complied readily. She climbed into bed with him and situated herself between his legs. He wasted no time in stroking up and down her thigh which caused her to let out a soft sigh. They stay in a companionable silence in the dark for quite some time before he spoke.

"Sweetheart, I want you to tell me about Charlie." He requested.

She looked at him with large eyes.

"What?" She choked in shock.

"I want you to tell me about Charlie. You carry around so much emotional baggage and I want to help you let some of it go." He explained.

He knew if he could help her though some of it, it would go a long way in helping her to be able to wield the Dragon's Tear so much more easily. She relied on her emotions so much to wield her magic, he couldn't imagine how hard it must be when she carried so many heavy emotions with her.

She sighed and relented knowing that he was right.

"Alright, I lived with Charlie in the orphanage. I got adopted by Tony and then he got adopted by a couple shortly after. They were proper and very Christian. You know how they try to match the kid to parents that fit them the best? Well they failed Charlie big time in that respect. These people tried
so hard to mold him into something that he just couldn't be. He lashed out big time. I was also going through a punk phase, I can't lie I was being a giant asshole to Tony and Pepper at the time. I managed to snag a fake I.D. and got into all kinds of shit. I snuck into so many raves." She started.

"At one such rave, I bumped into Charlie. We reconnected and became fast friends. He started coming over to the tower a lot because he never wanted to be at 'home', his 'parents' hated my ass by the way. They said that I was a bad influence. So we just stayed at the tower mostly. He taught me how to play the guitar. If we got sick of the tower we would go to a rave or walk through central park or just do whatever." She continued.

"One night, I'll admit that we were drinking alcohol stolen from Tony's bar because we were little assholes and he pulled out some kind of drugs I don't remember what they were. He offered me some but I chickened out at the last minute. He took some and I don't know if it was the combination of the booze and drugs or what but he just never woke up. His stupid 'parents' wouldn't let me say goodbye to him at the hospital or even attend his funeral. I just couldn't stand the grief or the thought that maybe if I was more sober I could have stopped him and he would still be alive. After everything was over, I got rid of everything that reminded me of Charlie because I couldn't even stand it anymore." She finished.

She couldn't help the sob that clogged her throat. His hold tightened around her and he tried to comfort her any way he could.

"Oh my sweet, sweet girl, it wasn't your fault. You were so young and it was so beyond your control." He comforted.

"I know, I know but it's so hard. All I can think about every day is if I was sober enough could I stopped him." She sobbed.

"Charlie wouldn't want you to think that. I know it's hard but you have to try and let it go." He said softly.

She tried to nod but ended up sobbing harder. He could sense that she knew that he was right but it was something that never properly accept or mourn for that matter possibly because the people that adopted Charlie were giant assholes and never let her get the closure that she so desperately required. She was right in saying that those people should have never been allowed to adopt that poor boy. He could sense though, that telling him what happened had helped a lot and he succeeded in what he was trying to do.

He curled around her protectively as she sobbed her grief out. He knew that she would feel a lot better after she was done but it was still so hard for him to watch. He could feel her pain and sadness. He stroked her hair back and cooed to her until finally he felt that she cried herself out. As she slept peacefully, she tried to cling closer to him.

He sighed and continued to stroke her messy hair out of her face, he promised himself that he would never let anything like this happened to her again.

She was HIS and he would protect her.
To Explore a Special Bond

Chapter Notes

A/N: Here's more! :) I forgot to say this in the last Chapter but thank you for the kudos and the subscriptions it means a lot!

Stephen

Letting out a groan, Stephen cracked open one eye and then the other. Neither he nor Irena ended up having a very good night. After the conversation about Charlie had ended and she had cried herself out, she slept peacefully for an hour or two and then woke up continuously after that due to dreaming bad dreams. He presumed that they were probably about Charlie and he felt terrible for that but knew that she couldn’t keep on bottling up all those heavy emotions for the sake of her mental health and the ability to wield her magic. Every time she woke up upset, he could feel her emotions and that would cause him to wake up because they were so strong abnormally so. He knew it must have something to do with the magical bond that he knew they shared whatever it was.

He could sense that she felt bad every time she accidently woke him up but it never really bothered him. Every time it happened, he would tell her as much and then help her get back to sleep. Looking down at her, a tender look formed on his face. She was now sleeping soundly all curled around him. One of her small hands was fisted in his shirt and the other was hidden underneath her mass of curls. Sometime in the night, she must have tried to kick the covers off because they were all bunched up at her knees. His shirt had ridden up slightly on her, giving him the perfect view of her curvy ass and cute panties. He couldn’t stop the slew of less than virtuous thoughts from entering his mind but he forced himself to behave for now.

As he made soft strokes up and down her back, he thought about letting her sleep a little more and trying to make her breakfast, key word being try. The way his hands were made any kind of task of that type very difficult plus he had never been that great a cook to begin with. Perhaps, he could beg Wong to help him, not that Wong was much better at cooking but it would be better than trying to do it alone his magic could only get him so far with this. Wong would never let him live it down but it would be worth it in the end.

Getting a plan in place, he tried to gently extricate himself from Irena’s iron grip which was easier said than done. Even in her sleep, she refused to be separated from him. He found it to be endearing. After a little work, he managed to free himself. He covered her up and placed a tender kiss on her forehead. After cleaning himself up some, he opened up the door to leave his room. As soon as he did, that little hell spawn dragon of hers bounded into the room and made herself comfortable in the sheets with her. Shaking his head, he left the room to go search for Wong, god help him.

Irena

Letting out a long, languid yawn, Irena cracked open her eyes. Instantly, she realized something was not right. She was no longer lying in Stephen’s bed, but lying on green grass as far as the eye could see. Looking up all she could see was endless blue sky. Where in the hell was she? Was she still dreaming? Forcing herself to get up, she looked down at herself and saw that Stephen’s white shirt had somehow become a white dress. Now she knew that she had to be somehow still dreaming, there was no other explanation. Suddenly, she sensed that she was no longer alone. Turning around,
she came face to face with the Ancient One or 'Mother' as she used to call her.

Smiling warmly at her, the Ancient One beckoned her forward and she complied readily.

"My dear sweet child, look at you, how you've grown." The Ancient One said softly.

She saw that the Ancient One seemed to be assessing her, her wise eyes landed on the relic glowing softly around her neck and they crinkled slightly.

"You have found your destiny, I see." She laughed.

Her mismatched bulged slightly at the word 'destiny'.

"Destiny?" She asked in shock.

"You are meant for that relic and that relic is meant for you. You are The Descendant of The Guardians." The Ancient One said by way of explanation.

Hearing that made her frown a little, if she was so damn special or had such an important destiny why in the hell did the person that she called 'Mother' modify her memory and send her away? She had to know why.

"If I'm so special why did you modify my memory and send me away?" She asked softly.

She watched a look of extreme sadness form on the features of The Ancient One and realized that there might be more to the story then she knew.

"I modified your memory and sent you away to protect you. There are many Sorcerers that would seek to try to steal your powers and use them against you. I felt that you were no longer safe at Kamar-Taj and I had to make a choice. Be selfish and risk your safety or do the right thing and keep you safe. I chose to keep you safe. I knew when the time was right you would end up where you needed to be." The Ancient One explained.

After hearing the explanation, she thought long and hard. She knew that her 'Mother' was right, from the memories of Kamar-Taj that she got back, a lot of the Sorcerers treated her like there was something they knew she had and they wanted. Even 'Mr. Mordo' acted weird towards her near the end before she was sent away. What if he even he would try and steal her powers away from her? Did he have darkness in his heart? Thinking that brought another question to her mind, what made Stephen so different from the other Sorcerers? What did he have that they didn't? She knew that there WAS something different about him because never once did she ever sense in him the want to seal her powers.

The Ancient One seemed to sense that she had a million questions floating through her mind.

"I sensed the darkness growing in Mordo's heart and could no longer trust him. I've sensed some darkness in the heart of every sorcerer I've crossed paths with in my 400 years, whether they choose to let it grow is up to them. Your Master Strange, however, I sensed no darkness in his heart. He seems to be the only Sorcerer I've sensed to be this way. You were meant to find him and him you. He is the only Sorcerer that would not seek to steal your powers." The Ancient One said seriously.

She let what her 'Mother' just told her sink in. She was meant to find Stephen? How could a person even know something like that?

"You have bonded with him have you not?" The Ancient One told her knowingly.
At this statement, her mismatched eyes got impossibly large and she started spluttering.

"How did you know that? I barely even knew that!" She exclaimed.

"You are forgetting that I am the Ancient One." The Ancient One laughed.

Suddenly, she saw that the Ancient One's eyes grew large.

"You are waking up now and your Master Strange needs you. It is time for you to leave this place." The Ancient One stated.

It was her turn to be shocked. She wasn't ready to leave just yet.

"NO! I still need to ask you questions about the bond!" She said sharply.

The Ancient One let out a soft laugh.

"I am sorry sweet child, but there are some things you must find out for yourself." She said wisely.

"We will meet again, be good." She added softly.

Suddenly, everything began to fade away and Irena found herself back in Stephen's bedroom and in Stephen's shirt once again. She was ass over tea kettle on the floor with the sheets all wrapped around her and Sapphire clinging to her face with a look in her big yellow eyes that clearly said 'What in the hell just happened to you?'

’If I only knew, Sapphire.’ She thought to herself.

She sat on the floor dazed for a moment until she began to smell something…unappetizing to say the least. Her senses were still kind of messed up from the transformation she went through yesterday. It probably smelled ten times worse than it was. Getting up off of the ground, she unstuck Sapphire from her face and placed her on Stephen's bed. She decided that she would get cleaned up and go figure out just where that god awful smell was coming from. She also noticed that Stephen was nowhere to be found and realized very quickly that he probably had something to do with the smell.

Going through her clothes, she decided to wear one of the new shirts that Clint got her for her birthday. She picked out one that had the band Seether on it; she also managed to locate a pair of pants and a pair of socks too. After changing, she also went to clean her teeth and throw her impossible curls up into a messy bun. Deciding that her appearance was as good as it was going to get, she left Stephen's room with Sapphire riding on her shoulder.

It took her no time at all to locate the terrible smell. She determined that it was coming from the kitchen. As she got closer to the kitchen, she could hear Stephen and Wong bickering. Now she was just curious. Entering the kitchen, she was shocked as she took in impossible sight before her. The kitchen was a mess and something was horribly burnt in a frying pan on the stove, hence the crappy smell. Both Stephen and Wong stood next to the mess in the frying pan bickering about whose fault it was. Go figure.

"Um guys, what's going on here?" She asked curiously.

They both turned to her and looked extremely embarrassed especially Stephen. For the first time ever, she could see a bit of red tint tops of his cheeks she found it to be completely adorable.

"Romeo here wanted me to help him cook you breakfast because he can't cook to save his damn life and I'm not much better so you can see how well it turned out." Wong explained.
She saw that Stephen's blush increased tenfold and he looked at Wong with outrage.

"WONG!" He yelled.

"WHAT? It's true!" Wong yelled back.

She could help but giggle at the whole entire absurd situation. She walked up to Stephen and placed a hand on his chest. She made stroking movements and she could feel him begin to calm down.

"Stephen, thank you for being so unbelievably thoughtful, don't worry I can fix it." She said softly.

Looking at her tenderly, Stephen bent down and gave her a soft kiss on the lips causing Wong to make gagging noises in the background. Breaking apart from Stephen, She rolled her mismatched eyes at Wong and got to work fixing the mess that they made. It took her no time at all to revive breakfast into something edible. All three of them sat at the small table at the end of the kitchen and began to consume their breakfasts with gusto.

"This." Wong said in between mouthfuls off food gesturing to his entire plate. "Is why we leave the cooking to you."

Stephen rolled his eyes and she let out a happy laugh.

"ANYWAY." Stephen said changing the subject.

"Irena, would you be up to continuing the cleaning efforts in my office while I help Wong in the library for a bit?" Stephen asked.

She thought for a moment and then nodded; it would give her a chance to check out that book on bonds.

"Sure, Stephen I can do that." She agreed.

Stephen smiled at her.

"Good girl." He said.

After finishing their breakfast, she, Stephen and Wong cleaned up the kitchen after they finished. Stephen and Wong went down the library. She went back to Stephen's office and got back to work. Sapphire jumped off of her shoulder and began to play around on Stephen's desk causing her to shake her head in exasperation. It took her no time at all to find the book on bonds she left there. She cracked it open and began to read. She had no idea there were so many types of bonds. She found the section on magical bonds and read.

Magical Bonds: In some cases, extended use of magic between two individuals may cause a magical bond to form. In most cases, both Sorcerers must have strong magic and one must be male and the other female. This bond forms on its own out of control of either Sorcerer. In rare times, the bond my form onto what is known as a Soul Bond. This bond occurs when the souls of the two individuals inexplicably become bonded to one another. This bond is everlasting and cannot be broken but is not fully completed until the individuals consummate their relationship.

She stopped reading for a moment and tried to process what she just read. It took her no time at all to realize that consummate meant intercourse. She could feel her face heating up until it must have been purple. Deep, deep down, she knew that's what was happening between her and Stephen. She started panicking inside; what if the only reason Stephen was attracted to her was because of the bond and the bond was forcing him to like her? Suddenly, she could feel Stephen close by and
wondered if he could feel her panic through the bond. That made her panic more. How was she supposed to even explain this to him? Never mind about the consummation part. It didn't take long for Stephen to appear in the doorway. She couldn't even bring herself to look up at him. She sensed that Stephen approached the desk quickly and he crouched down to her level. She could sense his worry.

"Sweetheart what happened?" He asked with worry dripping from every word.

She couldn't even find the words to explain it to him so she showed him the book instead. He read the book carefully and then gently forced her to look at him.

"Do you think that this bond is a bad thing?" He asked softly.

She shook her head 'no'.

"Then please tell me what the matter is." He coaxed gently.

"What if, what if the bond is the whole reason for any of this and it is forcing you to be with me?" She asked, her voice cracking halfway through the sentence.

He gave her a soft look and cupped her small hands in his large ones.

"Oh my sweet girl, I liked you far before the bond formed. I assure you that my feelings for you are real I promise you. I know you are scared but this isn't something you should fear." He reassured.

He stroked his thumb down her cheek and gave her a tender, loving kiss. She could sense the emotion he was trying to relay through the kiss and she could feel herself beginning to calm down. She could sense that he was being nothing but sincere and that the bond wasn't forcing him to like her. The bond was just magnifying feelings that were already there and clearly it was meant to happen from what The Ancient One told her in her dream. He parted from her slowly; she knew that he could sense she believed him. She wasn't even worried about the consummation part anymore; she knew that it would happen when it happened.

"Good girl." He murmured, smiling at her softly.

She decided that she could really use a break from learning about bonds, research and just being a magical anomaly in general. She really needed a coffee and she really wanted Stephen to come with her like it was a date. They hadn't had one outside the Sanctum yet and she thought it was about time they did. She decided to voice her idea to Stephen.

"Hey Stephen, would you like to get a coffee with me?" She asked curiously.

"I could really use a break." She added.

She could sense that Stephen really liked the idea.

"Sure, that sounds like an excellent idea." He agreed.

After giving Sapphire a command to go play, they left Stephen's office and then left the Sanctum all together. They walked down the street in a companionable silence, every once in a while she would point out either a place or area that was familiar to her and then tell Stephen a story about it. When they reached the small café, Stephen opened the door and allowed her to enter first.

'Ever the gentlemen.' She thought to herself.
She greeted Alex and introduced Stephen to him. She was happy to see that they seemed to get along well. She ordered her usual iced coffee made with chocolate milk instead of white milk and then she saw that Alex added Nutella filled scones in the case with all of desserts and decided that she had to have one of those too. She swore up and down that he put that shit in there on purpose just to spite her and her addiction to chocolate. After she placed her order and Stephen placed his, she asked him to wait for them while she ran to the bathroom very quickly. As she was cleaning up, she could sense that something was off. She wondered if that was the bond working. Sure enough, she exited the bathroom and there was Stephen going toe to toe with Dr. West. Clearly, they used to work together and got along like crap. She could just feel the annoyance dripping from Stephen. She knew what was happening.

"Hello, pissing match." She thought, inwardly rolling her eyes.

The situation seemed to worsen as she approached. Dr. West looked her up and down and opened his mouth to say something that would more than likely piss Stephen right off. Oh crap, she inwardly face palmed. So much for a decent first date in public. Somebody up there hated her and Stephen too for that matter. She really didn't want this to screw up their date so she just stepped in. She could feel Stephen's desire to show Dr. West just who she belonged too. So this is what the bond felt like. Now she just had to stop this before it reached a point of no return and either poor Alex got scarred for life or somebody got seriously hurt. Or both at this rate.

"Stephen, calm down. He isn't worth it, let's just get our stuff and go." She coaxed, stroking his chest softly.

She sensed through the bond that he really enjoyed that. It seemed to calm him enough that he complied. He picked up their order and tried to escort her out of the café. She barely got the chance to wave goodbye to Alex who looked stunned at what just transpired before his eyes she gave him an apologetic look back. After they got far enough from the café, Stephen vented his anger out.

"Oh I just hate that egotistical, pompous asshole! You think I'm egotistical? I've got nothing on him! The way he was looking at you made me want to vaporize him where he stood!" He groused.

She couldn't help but laugh.

"Shh sweetheart it's over now." She joked, patting his back.

"Oh har, har so very funny." He snarked.

His response to her joke just made her laugh louder. They walked the rest of the way back to the sanctum enjoying their coffees and in her case a Nutella filled scone. They talked about non-sense things and she began to feel less stressed. Even though the date turned out less than perfect, she enjoyed herself immensely. They got back to the Sanctum and he informed her that he would have to go back and help Wong in the library a bit more. He informed her that when he felt such distress coming from her that just dropped everything he was doing to see what the matter was. Oops.

She sighed and let him go even though she didn't want to. Before he left, he gave her a searing kiss that she enjoyed that held promises of things to come.

Sometime Later

Irena let out a long, slow sigh; she ended up giving in and testing out Stephen's bathtub. Boy, did she make the right decision. She still felt crappy and sore from the transformation plus the stress she was feeling didn't help. She picked out some of the bath products that Natasha and Wanda had given her
and went to town. God, did she feel so much better. She was so relaxed that she failed to hear or 
even see Stephen entering the bathroom. Suddenly, she was bombarded with so much shame coming 
from him. Her mismatched eyes popped opened and she looked up. There he was staring at her.

She froze momentarily and then unfroze quickly. She knew he felt such shame because he was 
caught staring at her and wasn't turning away. She wasn't upset by it or even embarrassed in fact she 
gained every ounce of courage and spoke.

"Well are you going to stand there staring at me all night or join me?" She asked curiously.

He looked at her like she grew six heads and sprouted little tiny purple horns. She couldn't help the 
snort of laughter that escaped her. He seemed to be rendered speechless for a moment before finding 
his words.

"Is this what you wish?" He asked seriously, she knew that he had to be sure that it was what she 
wanted. She was happy to know that he cared for her enough to ask her permission first.

She nodded and he complied readily.

She thought it time to test out some of those fantasies of hers.
Irena

Irena stretched languidly and let out a long soft sigh. She hurt in all the right places and had never felt so good in all her entire life. She could sense that Stephen was starting to wake up. A strong wave of desire suddenly shot through her. She never realized how insatiable Stephen was. She could sense that it had something to do with the bond, not that she minded at all. He wasted no time in shifting them so he was top of her. He looked at her tenderly and framed her head with his large hands. He stroked the sides of her face gently for a moment before letting one hand wander lower. He watched her intensely. She discovered that he enjoyed watching the facial expressions she made when he touched her in different places.

Just as she started to lose herself in the sensations that he created, her phone went off and started blaring *The Star Spangled Banner*. Not being able to stand it any longer, she moved to try and answer it but Stephen stopped her before she could.

"Ignore it." He growled into her ear, nipping at it playfully as he did so.

She tried to, she really did but the sound increased in volume and she just couldn't ignore it any longer.

"OH COME ON!" She yelled in outrage.

Turning in Stephen's embrace, she swiped her cell off of Stephen's bedside table and slammed her finger down onto accept call.

"WHAT STEVE!" She snarled.

The other end of the line was quiet for a moment before a deep voice spoke up that decidedly was not Steve.

"Doll face are you alright? I didn't interrupt anything did I?" It asked curiously.

Oh crap, it was Bucky. She had forgotten he sometimes used Steve's cell phone because Tony refused to let him have one of his own. That was something that she would definitely be changing as soon as she could. She would have to change Steve's ringtone now too because she never wanted to hear *The Star Spangled Banner* ever again.

"Um…" She started, struggling to find an answer for him.

She had no idea how to explain to him that he just interrupted some 'funny business' between her and Stephen.

Apparently the silence was all that he needed to figure it out anyway.
"Oh so I DID interrupt something. Well I can't say that I'm sorry." He said.

She was torn between being totally pissed off at being interrupted or being totally embarrassed that he managed to work out what he interrupted.

"Well hello to you too, did you actually need anything or are you just calling to make my life a living hell?" She griped.

Instead of being annoyed at what she said Bucky merely let out a barking laugh on the other end of the line. To make the situation worse, Stephen began to start teasing her again. He nipped his way down her neck and placed small warm kisses on her bare shoulder. She could barely concentrate on Bucky's response to her question. She tried to wriggle free from his embrace to no avail. She tried to grope for a pillow to shoo him away with but before she could Sapphire came to her aid and distracted him by jumping on his face.

"Demon spawn from hell!" He yelled in annoyance.

If the entire situation wasn't so stupid, she would have laughed at him. It was embarrassing enough already that she would have to ask Bucky to repeat what he said to her.

"Um what was that now?" She asked, trying to keep her voice level.

She could hear Bucky let out a sigh on the other end of the line.

"I said can you take a look at my arm sometime today? I think I fucked it up again." He explained.

She frowned, something wasn't quite right. Never had he screwed it up so many times in such a short span before. She couldn't leave him with a broken arm though.

"Sure, just...could you give me like an hour please?" She pleaded.

She heard Bucky let out an amused snort.

"Sure thing doll face, just don't do anything I wouldn't do." He joked, hanging up the phone.

Looking at the phone with pure exasperation, she let it drop onto the bed side table and turned back to Stephen who was still fighting with Sapphire. She laughed at the display and told Sapphire to cut it out.

"Sorry Stephen but you didn't leave me with much of a choice." She snickered.

Stephen rolled his eyes but she could sense that he wasn't mad at all. Sitting up properly, she pulled up the covers so they covered up her chest. While she was leaps and bounds more comfortable around him but she was still a little shy. He seemed to find this endearing; he looked at her tenderly until his eyes landed on her exposed back. Clearly, he was gazing at the three scars that ran down her lower back. Gently, he let his hand caress along the scars softly. She had to suck in a breath. The skin was extremely sensitive to the touch there. They sat in a companionable silence before she decided it was time get her ass moving lest she and Stephen get caught with their proverbial pants down.

Groping around the floor next to the bed, she located Stephen's white shirt that she must have left there accidently when she got ready yesterday morning. Picking it up, she slipped it over her head much to Stephen's protestations. She tried to get up from the bed but Stephen merely yanked her back down on top of himself.
"Not yet." He growled in protest.

"You are insatiable!" She squeaked in shock at being suddenly displaced.

"It's not my fault you are so delectable, my little minx." He purred.

He pulled her down into a searing kiss. His hands slid down her back and cupped her ass without any hesitation in an effort to bring her even closer to himself. He was making it damn near impossible to leave him and he was doing it on purpose, the asshole.

"Stephen, it's not that I don't want to continue this but Bucky will be here soon." She sighed softly.

Stephen let out a growl of protest but finally relented knowing that she was right.

"Fine." He relented.

Finally, he allowed her to leave the bed but not before giving her ass a light squeeze as she disengaged from him. She let out a shocked squeak. She would never get used to him doing that. Sticking out her tongue at him, she went into the bathroom to get cleaned up. She wasted no time in divesting herself of Stephen's top and hoping into the shower. She couldn't believe everything happened since she asked Stephen to join her in the bathtub the night before. She hadn't meant to let it get THAT far but once it started, there was no stopping it. Truth be told, she didn't regret it at all.

Stephen knew that she was very shy and nervous when it came to that stuff. He went out of his way to make sure she was comfortable with everything. He even told her that he would go as slow or as fast as she wanted. He told her that if at any time she felt uncomfortable with anything that he would stop and she knew how hard that it would be for him to do so. With Toby it had been nothing like that, he just took what he could get and that was that. Thankfully she never let it get that far otherwise she would have regretted it for the rest of life. If this is felt like to be loved completely in that way, she never wanted it to end.

Letting out a soft sigh, she exited the shower and toweled off her hair. She wrapped a towel around herself and brushed her teeth. After she finished up, she exited the bathroom and came across a scene that she would never forget. Stephen was sitting on the bed with the sheets covering his legs and bunched all around his hips. Sapphire was curled up in his lap and he was stroking her scaly little head with a small smile on his face. She couldn't help giggle that pealed out of her. He looked up at her with a sheepish look on his face at getting caught.

"So she's a demon spawned from hell, eh?" She laughed.

She watched Stephen roll his eyes.

"Alright, so she's not THAT bad when she isn't climbing on my face." He admitted.

Gently, Stephen moved Sapphire off of his lap and got up from the bed keeping the sheets bunched around his hips. For that she was eternally grateful, despite everything that they did together she was still a little shy. She sensed that he seemed to understand that. This was one of the many benefits of loving somebody who knew exactly what you needed when you needed it. She also sensed that he had wanted to join her in the shower but knew she needed a bit of alone time and was more than happy to give her what she needed. He was perfect but she would never tell him that out loud for fear of over inflating his already over inflated ego. But she knew that he knew what she thought of him.

He approached her and gave her a gentle, tender kiss. While one of his hands kept the sheets bunched around his hips the other cupped the side of her face. She let her hands explore his naked
chest briefly before regaining her senses. She broke the kiss and tried to push him away playfully.

"Quit trying to distract me." She mock complained.

He laughed at her warmly and let her separate from him.

"Stop making it so easy." He countered.

Rolling her mismatched eyes, she shooed him the direction of the bathroom. She pulled out her old black tank top and Tony's old work coveralls that she swiped back from the tower the last time she was over there. She put them on, she threw her hair into a bun and decided to grab on of her bandanas to keep her hair form getting into her face. It was bright green. She also made sure to grab her goggles just in case. She placed them around her neck. She was not going to take the chance of running any important clothes this time. She decided not to bother waiting for Stephen to get out of the shower. If she did, it would be just giving him another chance to distract her. She waited for Sapphire to climb up her shoulder and left the room. She made her way down to the 'practice room' and began setting up the room and began getting her tools ready while she was waiting for Bucky to arrive.

Soon, she sensed that Bucky had entered the Sanctum. It took time no time at all to locate the 'practice room' where she was. He entered the room and she gave a command to Sapphire to go play so she could examine his arm properly. She discovered quickly what the problem was. It looked like he jammed a damn screw driver in one of the seams where she had soldered the crappy piece of metal over the hole on his arm. Why in the hell would he do something like that? She gave him a look and she could sense that he knew that she was onto him.

"Okay Bucky, just what in the HELL is the meaning of this?" She asked, gesturing to the hole in the seam.

Bucky had the decency to look sheepish.

"Um, I needed an excuse to come and see you?" He said by way of explanation.

She gave him the stink eye.

"You could have come to see me without destroying all my work you know!" She griped.

Bucky scratched the back of his head in embarrassment.

"I'm sorry?" He said apologetically.

She rolled her mismatched eyes and pushed him into the chair she set up next to the table and began to examine the damage he did. As she did that, Stephen walked into the room looking very put together in his 'sorcerer garb' and the cloak of levitation sitting on his back. He smiled at her warmly and acknowledged Bucky in a friendly way which she was happy to see. She could sense that he was eager to start helping her out.

"So what's the damage?" He asked curiously.

"Dumb-ass over here jammed a screw driver in one of the seams where I soldered the metal onto his arm. He was just about to explain to me why he did it." She explained, exasperation dripping from every word.

She gave Bucky a look that clearly said 'I demand an explanation right now!' She could sense that Bucky seemed really embarrassed about something that wasn't damaging his arm on purpose.
"Um, I wanted to talk to you about Darcy." He muttered softly.

Her eyes almost bulged right out of their sockets.

"Excuse me?" She said in disbelief.

Bucky gave her a glare. She could sense this was extremely hard for him and she was making it worse. Oops.

"I'm sorry Bucky, please continue." She encouraged.

As he began to explain the situation he found himself in, she began to work on his arm with Stephen's help.

"I want to ask Darcy out." Bucky confessed.

"But I don't know how. I'm not the ladies' man I once was. How do I do that without scaring her away? I mean look at me." He continued.

She and Stephen looked at each other. She knew that he could sense the self-hatred as much as she could. She felt terrible for Bucky and knew that she needed to help him. As she pulled back the metal from Bucky's arm like it was a tin can, she began to check all of the wires and circuits inside to make sure the screw driver didn't damage anything she thought about how to best help Bucky out. Thankfully, Darcy already liked him so that helped a lot but she knew that he was scared. He thought the way he was now and all the stuff he did while he was brainwashed by hydra made him unlovable. That was not true and he had to know that.

"Bucky, you're fine the way you are. Trust me when I say you won't scare her away. She won't care about your past I promise you. Just keep it simple, take her to a pub and get some beer and wings and just talk. Everything will work out fine, I swear." She reassured.

Bucky sighed but nodded. She could sense that what she told him helped marginally and she was thankful for that. After making sure all of the wires and circuits were in their proper places, she resoldered the crappy metal back into place. She just hopped it would hold in place. She would have to replace it with better metal at a different time. Bucky took a moment to test out his arm. Satisfied with how it worked, he stood up from the chair and gave her a bone-crushing hug.

"Thanks doll face." He said, she could sense that he was thanking her for both fixing his arm and the advice.

"Anytime, just don't mess up your arm on purpose again." She said mock angrily.

Bucky let out a loud barking laugh.

"Don't worry, doll face." He replied.

Bucky turned to Stephen and gave him a friendly slap on the shoulder with his metal arm. "See you later, Strange." He said, leaving the room.

She saw that Stephen was glaring at Bucky's retreating form and rubbing his now sore shoulder. She let out a giggle and that caused Stephen to turn back in her direction and give her the stink eye.

"Hey, at least he doesn't hate you." She shrugged.

Stephen rolled his eyes at her which merely caused her to giggle more. She started putting her tools
away. As she did this, she could sense that Stephen was staring at her. To be more precise he was staring at the glowing blue relic around her neck. She looked at him a little weirdly.

"What?" She asked apprehensively.

He approached her and let his thumb stroke down her neck until it rested on the chain of the relic. He gave her a look that like he was about to ask something over that she might not like very much.

"Sweetheart, what would you say to testing out some of the capabilities of the relic?" He asked curiously.

She thought for a moment, while she was apprehensive about the whole thing it would probably better to know how to handle the relic in case she actually found herself in a situation where she had to use it.

She nodded knowing that she probably was not going to like what he suggested.

"Okay, what did you have in mind?" She asked.

"I want to see the level of control you have when you are half transformed like you were at your birthday party. More specifically, I want to see if you can actually fly with those dragon wings of yours." He explained.

She looked at him like she didn't even know how to respond to that.

"You…you don't plan on throwing me off a building to see if I'll fly or not do you?" She squeaked in shock.

His silence told her all she needed to know.

"No Stephen! I hate heights, what if I fall to my death or something?" She exclaimed in protest.

She sensed that Stephen was outraged that she would even suggest the idea of falling to her death, oh crap. He let her know what he thought about it.

"Do you really think I would really let that happen to you? I thought you trusted me!" He growled angrily.

She could sense that his anger was genuine and knew that she really upset him. Oh double crap.

"Stephen, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it to come out like that! Of course I trust you!" She tried to explain, she could feel the tears pooling in her eyes.

She hated it when he was angry at her; she always feared she would do something to make him not want her anymore. She didn't know what she would do without him. She knew that part of that was from the bond. He seemed to be able to sense what was happening with her. The look on his face softened considerably and he opened his arms to her. She wasted no time in entering his embrace and burying her head in his chest. He wrapped arms around her and his cloak wrapped around her too.

"Stephen, I'm sorry." She murmured.

"I am too; I know that you trust me sweetheart. I won't make you do anything you don't want to do."
He said softly, letting one of his hands weave through her messy tresses.

She let out a soft sigh at what he said.
"It's okay Stephen; we should really test out just what I can do with the relic. Just please go easy on me with the height of the building." She half joked.

This earned her a chuckle from Stephen.

"I'll try sweetheart." He said earnestly.

After a few moments, she reluctantly parted with Stephen and they left the practice room together. Before she and Stephen left the Sanctum together, she made to feed Sapphire and she grabbed her Doc Martins. They left the Sanctum and Stephen got to work picking out the perfect building to 'throw' her off of. He wrapped arms around her, made sure she was secure (which honestly did not matter because she was clinging to him like he was a freaking tree trunk) and levitated her up to the roof of the building. After they landed on the roof, it took her a few moments until she was able to disengage from him and he found this quite amusing, she wanted nothing more than to flip him off.

After she calmed down a little bit, she turned to Stephen.

"Would you like me to try and activate it now?" She asked curiously.

Stephen nodded eagerly. She inwardly shook her head in exasperation. He was acting like a giant kid in a candy store.

"Alright, here goes everything." She said, concentrating hard.

Suddenly, she felt it. She had managed to tap into the relic. Because her emotions weren't so out of control, it was far easier to do and she felt way more in control of the transformation it was also way less taxing. The blue dragon wings exploded from her back, her eyes changed and her fangs lengthened but she was completely in control. It felt very weird. She tried to move her wings experimentally found that she could in fact do it. Stephen looked completely enthralled with the whole thing.

"Can you try…flapping them?" He requested.

She did as he asked and flapped them. She was shocked that she could actually do it.

"Amazing." He said in awe.

"Do you…you think you are ready to try flying?" He asked, completely excited.

She looked a little apprehensive but nodded.

"I can sure try, but please for the love of god catch me if it goes to shit." She pleaded.

He gave her a tender look.

"Of course I will, sweetheart." He intoned softly.

She nodded and approached the edge of the building slowly. She swallowed hard and decided that she had to do this like pulling off a Band-Aid. In one quick, swift motion, she jumped off the building and began flapping her wings rapidly and it wasn't working at first. She kind of looked like a featherless, demented looking chicken trying to fly. She began to panic and was about to call for Stephen until she heard the familiar voice of the Ancient One echoing in her head.

*Trust in your instincts.*

She closed her eyes and tried to do just that. She spread open her wings fully and gave one hard flap.
She felt herself being propelled upwards and did it again. It looked very sloppy but she was in fact flying. She managed to get her sorry ass back to the roof of the building without having to be rescued by Stephen. When she got there, she collapsed onto the roof and lost her transformation but she had never felt more proud of herself in her entire life. Stephen raced over to her to make sure she was okay and he helped her back onto her feet. She swayed and collapsed into him.

"I'm okay, I swear." She reassured him.

He looked at her so intensely; he pushed her messy hair out of her face and cradled her face in his hands tenderly. He gave her a soft, gentle kiss.

"You are the most amazing person I have ever met, kitten." He murmured.

She could sense that he was being nothing but sincere and she gave him a soft look back.

"Thank you." She said softly, moving in for another kiss.

THAT had to be the most amazing thing, terrifying thing she ever experienced but she knew that she was meant to do it. This is who she was meant to be.

She was MEANT for magic.
Stephen

Over the next few days, he and Irena continued to practice her transformations and flying. Each and every time she did it, it amazed him more and more. He was also amazed at how much her magic improved in general since she came to the Sanctum. Almost every time now, she managed to summon her fans on the first attempt compared to when she first started out and it took her multiple attempts to summon anything. Now that she was so adept at summoning, he wanted to test out whether or not she could combine her own magic with that of the relic.

Currently, he and Irena were in the 'practice room' trying to put theory into practice but it was proving to be easier said than done. He could sense the frustration rolling off of her in waves and he couldn't help but find it completely adorable. It seemed that every time she summoned her fans, she would lose her transformation. He was sure with practice that this could be eventually overcome. It took her no time at all to sense his amusement at her predicament.

"You just enjoy watching me suffer don't you?" She griped.

He chuckled warmly at what she said.

"Oh come now, kitten. It's not that bad." He teased.

He watched her roll her mismatched eyes and stick her tongue out at him. Seeing that cute little pink tongue of hers caused a spike of desire to shoot through him. She could be so delectable at times without even realizing it. It was one of the many things he adored about her. Thinking about how delectable she could be made his mind wander to the other night when they 'christened' his bathtub. That night had to rank up there as one of the most enjoyable he's had in quite a while. He had honestly not meant to walk in on her like he did. But when she wasn't in his study when he came to find her, he became concerned. He knew that she was emotionally exhausted and he worried about her. He decided that he would go and check his room thinking that she may have went to take a nap or something. When he had entered his room, he was not expecting to see his bathroom door half open with light pouring out from it.

He could sense her but it was so faint that he really became concerned. It never once occurred to him that she might be THAT relaxed that it was messing with her magical signature. At that point, his concern was overriding his common sense and he entered the bathroom without knocking or thinking for that matter. The sight that had greeted him on the other side of door would be forever seared into his mind. There she was sitting in his tub, her freckled face flushed from the heat, her eyes closed and her lips slightly parted. It didn't take long for the shame to bubble up to the surface because he could not bring himself to look away. Then, she shocked him momentarily speechless by asking him to join her. He found himself unable to deny her. He hadn't mean for it to go as far as it had but once it had started there was no stopping it. It was something he could never regret, however. She had given him a very special gift that night and he would always treasure it. Even after
everything they did together, she remained still so shy and he found it incredibly endearing. She was HIS shy, sweet little kitten and he loved all of it.

Thinking all of this made him want nothing more than to end the practice session now so they could go and do it again. As he was about to put that idea into practice, a shift in the magic of the Sanctum caused him to be ripped from that train of thought. Whatever was happening, it felt very…evil. He wasted no time in leaving the practice room and going to check it out. He could sense Irena following close behind him. He knew that there was no way her could force her to stay behind. He could only hope her magic was strong enough now that she could fight with it. He could sense her worry.

"What the hell IS that, Stephen?" She asked, worry dripping from every word.

"I don't know, sweetheart." He admitted.

He exited the Sanctum keeping Irena behind him protectively. He was shocked to see the outside of it teaming with shapeless black masses. He knew what they were. They were called the faceless ones. Some sorcerers considered them to be demons. Lackeys summoned by sorcerers that have lost their hearts to darkness. They weren't exactly THAT hard to summon, but they were kind of brainless and hard to control. They couldn't kill but they did have a venomous bite that could cause a sorcerer or any human for that matter days of pain and hallucinations.

"What are these things?" Irena squeaked in fear.

"Faceless ones, they can't kill you but their bite can hurt you so please be careful. They are slow and not very smart so destroy them quickly. We have to keep them from entering the sanctum." He explained.

If they got into the Sanctum, there was no telling what their evil could taint.

He got into a battle stance and summoned his orange blade. He watched Irena do the same and summon her fans. As they were getting ready to start dispatching the baddies, Wong suddenly exited the Sanctum and summoned his blade.

"Am I tardy to the party? Where did all these faceless ones come from anyway?" Wong asked curiously.

He fought the urge to let out an exasperated sigh. He shot Wong a look that said 'Seriously? Hell if I know that'. Wong had the decency to look sheepish.

"Alright, alright I get it. More kill-y, less talk-y." Wong said.

He watched as Wong sliced his blade through a faceless one without batting an eyelash. He and Irena also wasted no time in getting to work.

Irena

For her first time actually fighting an enemy, she was holding her own pretty well. Stephen was right; these faceless ones were kind of slow and stupid. But she could sense the evil radiating off of them and didn't like how it felt. It felt like hopelessness. Each and every time she sliced through one with her fans, they would let out a high pitched, inhuman wail. The sound grated against her sensitive hearing but she didn't relent. It seemed like they were never ending, each time one of them killed one more would appear. Both Stephen and Wong turned to face her.

"Hey little sister, I might be time for you to call in some back up." Wong suggested.
She could sense that Stephen agreed. She nodded.

"Okay, keep these assholes off of me and I'll see what I can do." She agreed.

While Stephen and Wong kept the faceless ones distracted, she dismissed her fans and tried to pull out her phone. Her phone wasn't an ordinary phone. It was made by Tony and all of the Avengers had one. Each one came equipped with an emergency call button. She managed to get the phone out of her back pocket. She hit the emergency call button and quickly shoved the phone back in her back pocket. She re-summoned her fans and got back to work. It wasn't long before she sensed that Tony, Steve and Thor were coming.

'Thank god, maybe Thor can zap the crap out of them.' She thought hopefully.

It took them no time at all to join the fight.

"Look at them having a party without us! How rude!" Tony said clicking his tongue.

She rolled her eyes. "Fight now and talk later please!" She yelled.

Tony merely laughed and began blasting every creature he saw. Steve threw his shield and managed to get three at once. Thor used Mjolnir to smash as many of them as he could but it didn't seem to be enough.

"Hey Merlin, what is the 411 on these assholes anyway?" Tony asked.

She watched Stephen twitch in annoyance at the nickname but he answered Tony anyway.

"These creatures are called the faceless ones. Pretty mindless and pretty dumb but don't underestimate their bite unless you want to be in pain and hallucinating for a days on end." He advised.

"Well that just sounds peachy. Thor do you think you can zap 'em?" Tony asked Thor.

Thor nodded.

"I will try." Thor replied.

Thor swung Mjolnir and charged it as much as he could. He let loose a giant lighting storm but they still kept coming. What in the blue hell? Why wasn't anything stopping them? Stephen looked just as clueless.

"Shit, they shouldn't be this hard to kill. The sorcerer who summoned them must be extremely strong with their magic." Stephen said.

That was the first time she heard him say the word 'shit'. If the situation wasn't so dire, she probably would have laughed out loud. Just as he said that, she began to feel something weird like she was sensing another sorcerer's magical signature. It felt…familiar, her eyes got huge and she froze. It couldn't be. She was so in shock that she lost her concentration and her fans disappeared suddenly. She stood in place unmoving completely frozen. She could hear Stephen yelling desperately at her to move.

"Irena, what are you doing? MOVE!" He roared.

However, it was too late. Before she could get her wits about her one of the faceless ones jumped onto her back, it let out an ear-piercing shriek and bit down hard onto her shoulder. The pain was
instant and it brought her to her knees. She let out a pain filled scream. The person closest to her was Steve, who let out his own angry exclamation. He used his shield to knock the creature off her back and then separated its head from its neck with it. Suddenly, there was a flurry of movement next to her. She could sense that Stephen was very close to her and he most likely pushed Steve out of the way. She could sense Stephen's anger and fury through the bond. It was pulsing and strong. She knew that the bond was now driving him to protect her from what he felt was a threat to her and right now that meant everything and everybody. That included, Wong, Tony, Steve and Thor.

'So much pain.' She thought hazily.

She wanted to try and tell Stephen to stop but her brain wasn't working with the rest of her body properly anymore. Everything became fuzzy and could barely tell what was happening around her. She knew that there were people taking and that was about it. She could vaguely hear Tony yelling about 'Merlin hulking out.' Crap, she couldn't move to help Stephen try to calm down even if she wanted to. Suddenly, something started trying to appear in front of her. Oh crap, this must be the hallucinating part Stephen was talking about. She was shocked to see Charlie kneeling in front of her, amber eyes glowing wearing the same black beanie and black baggy clothes he always wore and he forever had 'emo' hair as she told him more than once.

"Charlie what you doing here, am I dead?" She asked, horrified.

Charlie laughed out right at the question.

"No sassy pants, you aren't dead. It's just hallucination I promise." He said.

She frowned that the stupid nickname. Even in her hallucination he still called her that.

"Do you have to call me by that stupid nickname?" She griped.

"Sorry, you'll always be sassy pants to me. Now you have to listen to me really well alright? You can't let this shit get you. You have to get rid of these assholes and you are the only one who can do it. You have this great power inside of you and you can't be afraid to use it. This is who you are you need to own it." He said wisely.

She knew that he was right. She couldn't be afraid of her gifts any more or she would never be able to help anybody when she needed to. She nodded at what Charlie said.

"Okay Charlie, you're right I promise I won't be afraid anymore and I'm sorry about everything that's happened." She murmured softly, she could feel the tears pricking at her mismatched eyes.

Charlie's eyes softened at her apology.

"No apology necessary. What happened was not your fault besides I'm okay where I am now. I promise you that. Now get your ass back in there, sassy pants." He reassured.

She wanted to roll her eyes at being called that stupid nickname but nodded.

Suddenly, she saw that Charlie began to fade away and she knew that the hallucination had ended. She realized that Charlie was right. She had to put a stop to this before somebody else got bit or Stephen hurt someone before she could stop him. She could feel her power growing and pulsing inside of her. She concentrated really hard and let loose a huge, bright pulse of magic. It seemed to dissolve every faceless one it came into contact with. Finally, every last faceless one was gone and she felt her body relax. Gaining a bit of her wits back, she saw that everybody was staring at her shock even Stephen. She tried to slide to the ground but Stephen caught her before she could. Tony tried to approach her and Stephen gave him a look that clearly said 'Stay the hell put' She was
eternally grateful that he decided to listen for once. She let out a pain filled noise and Stephen held her closer. She watched his cloak disengage from him and wrap around her. It was covering the ugly wound on shoulder.

Tony was the first to regain the ability to speak.

"Geeze kid, what the hell even was all of that and why did Merlin here hulk out on us?" Tony asked softly.

She had no idea how to start on any of it. She looked to Wong for help since Stephen still wasn't himself at the moment.

Wong

He couldn't believe any of what he just witnessed nor did he know how to deal with it or explain it to Stark for that matter but he was going to have to DO something. Stark had a right to know what was happening to his daughter even though there were some parts he wouldn't like about it. Which was what he was worried about. He didn't want to do anything that would jeopardize the bond between Stephen and Irena. It was so strong, probably the strongest that he's ever felt. He knew that being apart for any real length of time could be detrimental to the both of them. Right now though, he had a more important problem. How in the hell would he be able close enough to Irena to help her without Stephen vaporizing him?

First things first, he had to deal with Captain America and Thor. It was going to be hard enough explaining everything Stark never mind those two. Everything would be so much easier if they just went back to the tower and Stark just explained everything to them there. He needed to get rid of as many of what Stephen perceived to be 'threats' so it would be easier to approach him. He really didn't want to get his head blown off.

"Hey, you two." He started, gesturing to the Captain and Thor. "I think it'll be easier for you to wait for Stark back that the tower. Don't worry about Irena, she'll be okay I promise."

Thor looked extremely upset at the idea of leaving Irena but Captain America seemed to understand thankfully. He gestured for Thor to follow him and after a bit coaxing and explaining he did. He sighed with relief. That was one problem down, now for the important one. He gestured for Stark to step back. Put his hands up in the surrender position, he approached Stephen and Irena very slowly. He saw that Stephen's cloak was covering almost all of her and that Stephen had one arm wrapped around her. Stephen positioned the other arm as if he was going to fire spell off at him. He could see that Irena was shaking through the cloak and he could sense that she was in a great deal of pain.

"Stephen, you know that Irena needs help. Nobody here is a threat to Irena anymore, please let me help her." He coaxed.

It took a moment, but he could sense that Stephen was calming down some and beginning to return to himself. Thank god for that. Stephen nodded and scooped up Irena into his arms. He entered the sanctum without uttering one word. He turned to Stark and gestured for him to follow him. He entered the Sanctum and went down the library. He knew that's where Stephen was going with Irena. He kept a stash of magical stuff down there and Stephen knew it. He could whip up a salve to help Irena with the pain. Thankfully, she stopped hallucinating so that was good. When she was hallucinating earlier, he would never forget the look that she had on her face. Clearly, she was hallucinating something profound.

Something else bothered him, why did she even freeze in the first place anyway? That wasn't like her at all. It was like she must have SENSED something that threw her off kilter. He knew that Stephen
He entered the library and saw that Stephen was now sitting in a chair with Irena in his lap and he was trying to soothe her. He gestured for Tony to continue to follow him so he could try and explain magical bonding to him as he made up the salve.

"So am I finally getting some answers here?" Stark asked annoyed.

He held back an annoyed sigh and told himself that Stark didn't know any better and he was worried about Irena.

"Yes, as you can see, Stephen and Irena share a magical bond. There is no explaining how it happens, it just somehow does. It's just something in their magic that binds them together and on occasion it gets even stronger and the name for that is a 'soul bond'. Where the souls of the individuals literally bind together and it can't be undone. When they consummate the bond, it becomes permanent." He explained.

He gave Stark a moment to process that and started throwing the salve together, there was not much that could be done for Irena except to manage the pain until everything returned to normal which could take a few days. Because her magic was so unique, who knew how long it would take for her to get back to normal.

"So wait a minute, when you mean consummate you mean..." Stark trailed off going a little green.

He had to keep himself from snickering at Stark's reaction.

"Sorry but...yes that." He confirmed.

For a moment, he thought for sure that Stark was going to hurl all over his library floor but then he managed to pull himself together.

"Okay, what about the giant magic explosion thing?" Stark asked changing the subject quickly.

He bit back a sigh now this was the complicated part, how was he going explain to Stark that his daughter was the descendant of an ancient race of super sorcerers? He decided that it might be better left to Irena to explain that to him when she was feeling up to it.

"I'm sorry Stark, that's not my place to say but it isn't bad. It would be better off coming from Irena." He explained.

Although he could sense that Stark hated the answer he gave him, he accepted it. He finished up the salve and they left the small storage room where he kept all of his magical stuff. They re-entered. He frowned when he saw Irena and so did Stark for that matter. She looked awful; He saw that Stephen was still trying to soothe her but her pain was too much for it to be of much help. He approached Stephen carefully with the pot of salve in his hand. He was relieved to see that he was mostly himself again.

"Here Stephen, that should lessen the pain." He explained.

Stephen looked at him extremely gratefully.

"Thank you my friend." Stephen said sincerely.

He watched Stephen pull back his cloak to reveal the wound. He sucked in a breath; it looked ugly, black and very painful. He felt awful like he failed his little sister somehow. It was determined very quickly that Stephen couldn't apply the salve now because her shredded shirt would have go first so
he quickly pulled the cloak back over the wound. He couldn't stop wondering just why in the hell she froze in this first place. He could sense that she knew what he was thinking. She flinched a little bit and clung harder to Stephen. He could sense he wanted to know what happened too, hell they all did. He could sense her fear whatever she felt, it wasn't good.

Irena

She could sense what Wong was thinking and she couldn't help the bolt of fear that ran through her. She wasn't really ready to tell anybody what she felt yet, not even Stephen. Usually, she wasn't afraid to tell him anything. But this, this was something completely different and it really scared her. She knew that she would have to tell him at some point, she just wasn't ready to do it now. She could sense that Stephen was going to ask her anyway.

"Sweetheart, what happened to you out there when you froze like that?" He asked softly.

She bit at her lips and looked away. She just couldn't answer him yet. She could sense that he was going to try again but Tony stopped him by placing a hand on his shoulder. She was shocked that Stephen didn't try to vaporize him or something.

"Merlin, trust me on this one. Just let her talk to you when she is ready. Believe me I have been dealing with it for 13 years now." Tony advised.

She frowned at what Tony said, if wasn't feeling so much like death right now, she would have flipped him off for that. Tony turned to her and placed his metal hand on her head.

"Kiddo, I am going to go back to the tower and tell spangly and grease lightning you're alright, okay? Take care of yourself." He said softly.

"I will." She replied softly, bidding him goodbye.

After Tony left the library, Stephen wasted no time in carrying her out of the library and up to his room. No offence to Wong but she didn't want anybody but Stephen right now. She was feeling so gross and she hurt so badly. As Stephen went to remove his cloak so he could see the wound clearly, he found that the cloak refused to cooperate. She determined that the cloak must think it was protecting her. If she wasn't so damn miserable she would have thought it really cute.

"Come on now you silly cloak, now is not the time for that." She chastised softly.

It seemed to work and the cloak loosened from her slightly, so Stephen could check the wound and fix it up a little. He went to get more supplies from the bathroom and she immediately missed him. She knew it was because of the bond between them and it would be messed up for some time. He returned quickly with supplies and got to work. As gently as he could, he removed her ripped up shirt. He started cleaning up around the wound and oh my god did it hurt like holy hell. She couldn't help the pain filled noises that escaped from the back of her throat and the tears that continuously streamed down her face. Seeing her tears caused him to stop what he was doing momentarily. He looked at her tenderly and wiped them away with his thumb.

"I know it hurts sweetheart, I know. I'm almost done." He soothed.

He finished cleaning it up and rubbed some of the magical salve that Wong made on it. It didn't make the pain totally disappear but it was a hell of a lot better. He placed a bandage over it to keep the salve from getting everywhere. She watched him go to his dresser and pull out a black shirt that he clearly used for pajamas. He gave it to her. He knew that she wanted on of his shirts instead of her pajamas.
"Here kitten put that on while go put this stuff away." He mumbled softly, giving her a tender kiss on her temple.

She could sense that he didn't really want to part with her but he forced himself to do it momentarily. While he was in the bathroom, she removed her pants and bra. She managed to get the shirt mostly on but was having great difficulty getting her arms and head through the holes properly because of her shoulder. Luckily Stephen exited the bathroom quickly and came to rescue her. He gave her a look of affection as he did so. They sat in silence for a while until Sapphire came out from under Stephen's bed and curled into her lap. She stroked her scaly for a bit until the gravity of the day started getting to her and the tears started again. Gently, Stephen shifted them so she was in his lap. He rocked her back and forth and cooed to her. His cloak tried to re-wrap around the both of them.

This was the first time she came into contact with dark magic and she knew without a doubt that she hated it so very much.
To Test an Unbreakable Bond

Chapter Notes

A/N: Here is another chapter good to go!

Stephen

Staring at Irena's sleeping form, Stephen sighed softly. It took several hours but she was finally sleeping soundly. She had completely wrapped herself around him and had her face buried in his chest. She had one of her hands sort of tucked underneath her and the other was grasping a handful of his shirt. He stroked her messy curls thoughtfully. He couldn't get the look on her face when she froze during the fight with the faceless ones out of his mind. He had never seen such a look on her face before and hoped that he would never have to see it again. Something had really and truly frightened her. It bothered him immensely that she refused tell him what she sensed. It bothered him even more that Stark actually gave him a piece of sound advice for a change and he was forced to use it. But he had no choice; he had to wait for her to come to him. If he forced her to tell him, it would be detrimental not only to her but the entire situation at hand. His little kitten was as stubborn as she was shy and playful. As much as he wanted to know right now, he would have to wait for her to come around.

As he continued to run his hand through her hair, his stormy blue eyes drifted to her bandaged up shoulder peeking through the neck of his shirt. Looking at the bandaged wound on her shoulder, he felt his anger spike. He forced himself to tamp it down before she could sense it through the bond. It would do her no good to feel his anger on top of everything else that she was feeling. He thought back to what happened to him just after she was bitten. It was like the bond had taken over and all that mattered was eliminating any threat to her and that meant everybody. He was left unable to discern who was a friend and who was an actual foe. It was frightening; luckily Wong understood what was happening and took charge of the situation and managed to get everything under control before he hurt somebody. Stark called it 'hulking out' and he would have to agree with that assessment. He had been literally out of control.

Gently, he pulled back the neck of his shirt so he could examine the wound more closely. Luckily, he managed to do it without causing her to stir. He could see that the bandage had become full of seepage from the wound. Damnit, now he would have to wake her up so he could change it. The salve that Wong had made for her wound not only helped with the pain but it helped pull any remaining foulness from the wound as well. He felt like a total asshole doing this but he was left with little choice in the matter. Tenderly, he nuzzled his face into the crook of her neck.

"Sweetheart." He murmured.

She let out a low, pitiful groan.

"What, Stephen?" She whined.

"I have to change your bandage. I'm sorry, kitten." He explained softly.

She let out a long sigh.
"Alright, fine." She mumbled softly.

He could sense her annoyance at being woken up and that she really didn't want move but he could also sense her pain returning. She let out a pain filled moan. He knew that she would feel better again after he re-applied the salve. As gently as he could, he tried extricate himself from her so he could go retrieve the supplies he needed to change her bandage. It took him a few minutes but he managed to free himself without causing her too much discomfort. He watched her for a moment and his features softened as he watched her try to unsuccessfully to wriggle into a more comfortable position. He wasted no time in going to retrieve the supplies that he needed to get the job done. He returned and placed everything on the bedside table closest to her. Gently, he tried to coax her into a sitting position which was easier said than done. She was so out of it from lack of sleep and using too much magic at one time.

He decided the best way to do it was for him to kneel in front of his bed because he was so tall and position her so one leg was on either side of his hips. That way she could rest her head on his shoulder while he did most of it. As gently as he could, he tried to remove her shirt and she tried to help him the best that she could. He watched her face pinch in pain as she did so and he tried to soothe it away. He ignored the fact that she was completely topless against him and got to work. That was the advantage of once being a doctor, he was trained to ignore that stuff when he had to even though he would rather not. He removed the soiled bandage and bit back an angry growl at how the wound looked it was seeping, ugly and angry. He knew the salve would help it to look better eventually but seeing it like that activated the bond and drove his protective instincts into overdrive. He was so angry that he failed to stop it from happening in the first place.

He tried to be quick and make it as painless as he could but he could still sense her pain through the bond. It tore him up inside. At a particularly painful area, she let out a painful mewl and he could feel her tears soaking through his shirt. He wanted nothing more than to find out who summoned the vile creatures in the first place and destroy them slowly and painfully.

"Stephen, can you stop now please?" She asked softly.

He sucked in a breath at the question. It pained him to tell her no he couldn't stop just yet.

"I can't yet Sweetheart, but just hold on and I will be done very soon." He reassured.

She nodded against his shoulder.

"Hurry, please." She begged him.

He finished as quickly as he could and was very happy with his handy work. The wound looked marginally better now. He opened the pot of salve and covered the wound with it. She let out a sigh of relief and he could sense her pain lessening greatly. He placed a fresh bandage over the wound carefully and managed to get his shirt back onto her with a little maneuvering. Again, she tried to help him get her arms in the holes the best that she could. As he pulled it down, he soothed her by letting his hands caress her sides softly. He could sense that it helped her feel better immensely. As she continued to rest peacefully against his shoulder, he tossed the soiled bandage and used supplies into the trash can he had sitting next to the bed. He decided to keep the rest of the supplies out so he wouldn't have to go through such a hassle to retrieve them next time.

After letting her rest on his shoulder for a few more minutes, he decided that it was time to change positions. Not only was he getting pretty uncomfortable, but he needed more sleep and he knew that she desperately needed more sleep. She had used up so much magic that he was shocked that she was functional at all. As gently as he could, he stood up making sure not to move her too much and shifted her so she was lying back down in the bed. He wasted no time in lying next to her and
curling himself around her small from protectively. She immediately snuggled into him and drifted off into a peaceful sleep. It took him not time at all to join her.

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A Few Days Later

Irena

Sitting up in Stephen's bed, Irena let out a soft sigh as she flipped through the book that Thor had given her. She had to do SOMETHING to keep from losing her sanity. Now that she was feeling like herself again, it was getting more difficult for her to want to stay in bed. She figured it was either read or practice her guitar some or go stir crazy. Since she didn't think she could handle the arm movements that came with practicing the guitar yet, she decided that the book from Thor was a better option. As she read, she stroked Sapphire's little scaly head as she slept on the pillow next to her. She determined that Asgardian magic was very different than the magic she was used to. When she felt up to it, she would have to test out a couple of spells from the book. She was very curious to see what would happen and if she would be able to add them to the arsenal of spells she knew now. Suddenly, her phone beeped and she groped around to find it. She found it underneath the pillow that Sapphire was currently sleeping on. Unlocking it, she discovered that Darcy had sent her a text.

Hey Shithead, how are you? Stevey told me and Bucky what happened to you! -D

She typed a reply back quickly. She winced at Bucky finding out about the whole situation, he must hit the roof when Steve told him.

Feeling a lot better now, thank you. OMG! He must have lost his shit! -I

Good, good and eh it wasn't THAT bad. Nothing I couldn't handle anyway! ;) -D

A severely grossed out look crossed her features and she shuddered. Leave it to Darcy to drop the biggest TMI, now all she could visualize was Darcy and Bucky doing things that she really did not need to know about.

Gee thanks D, because I really needed to know that part! :P –I

Omg, did upset your delicate sensibilities? What are you like 12 still? You can't tell me you and your hot sorcerer haven't messed around yet. – D

As she read the reply that Darcy sent, her mismatched eyes bulged slightly and a choking sound erupted from the back of her throat. Well, Darcy got her there. She had to tell her the truth because she would be able to smell a lie a mile away.

Alright, alright you got me there, D. –I

HA! Thought so! So I have something to ask you. Do you think you could come to the tower later? I have soo much stuff to tell you! –D

She couldn't help but smile as she read Darcy’s text. Clearly, what she told Bucky helped a lot.

I can sure try! I'll have to figure out how to get passed Stephen though. –I

Easy, peasy! Just use those feminine wiles of yours and you'll be just fine. –D

She faceplamed at Darcy's response, not everybody could manipulate men like she could.
Easy for you to say! Not everybody can manipulate men like you can! –I

HAHA, you underestimate how crazy for you that man is! You'll be fine, text me when you know what is happening. –D

She thought long and hard for a moment. Perhaps she could use the bond between her and Stephen to her advantage a bit. She shook her head, Darcy was trying to turn her evil.

Alright D, you win. I'll text you when I know what's up! –I

Sounds good! I'll ttyl! –D

Ttyl! –I

Finishing up texting with Darcy, she reached over Sapphire and dropped her phone on the bedside table closest to her. She went back to reading her book until she could start to sense that Stephen coming closer to the bedroom. She chewed at her lips. How the HELL did she let Darcy talk her into doing this? She was way too shy for this crap. She watched the door creak open and Stephen stick his head in. He smiled warmly when he saw that she was up and reading. He entered all the way into the bedroom. He approached the side of the bed and sat down facing her. He let his hand stroke down her sheet covered thigh.

"Look at you, sweetheart! It's so nice to see you looking like yourself again!" He said happily.

She returned his warm smile.

"Believe me it feels pretty good to feel like myself again." She agreed.

He watched her intensely for a moment and she shifted uncomfortably. She could sense that he knew something was up. Damn her inability to keep her emotions stable when something was bothering her.

"You are hiding something from me, kitten." He said knowingly.

She sighed and looked away. Because of how strong the bond was, he would be to tell instantly if she lied to him. He removed his hand from her sheet covered thigh. He stroked the side of her face tenderly and gently forced her to look him in the eyes.

"Tell me." He ordered softly.

He was looking at her so intensely now, she wasn't left with much of a choice.

"Um well, here's the thing. Darcy texted me and wants me to go see her at the tower for a bit." She explained.

The change in him was immediate; she could sense his protectiveness exploding through the bond. She could see that the words 'absolutely not' were on the tip of his tongue. At this rate, if she didn't do SOMETHING she would be spending the rest of her damn life trapped in a plastic bubble. Before he could say anything, she gently removed his hand from her face and just held it in her small one. She stroked the fine scars he had there softly. He looked at her in a way he never had before, like she was everything. She could feel his emotions shifting through the bond. He was so petrified to lose her. She had to calm him down.

"Stephen, relax." She cooed softly.
"I just want to visit Darcy for a few hours. I promise to take a portal there and back. We won't leave the tower, I swear." She reassured him.

She knew that he was taking what she said into consideration but his emotions were still all over the damn place. Letting go of his hand, she reached out and cupped the sides of his face with her small hands. She stroked along his high cheek bones and then down along his lower jaw. He let out a contented noise from back of his throat and she could sense through the bond that he was beginning to calm down some. As she went to remove her hands from his face, he let out a noise discontentment and that caused her to laugh softly.

"Feel better now?" She asked knowingly.

He looked at her tenderly and nodded.

"How I adore your touch, my sweet little kitten." He said earnestly.

Hearing that made her feel so good inside, nobody had ever told her anything like that before ever. She loved it when he told her things like that. Now that he was calm, she thought about how to best broach the subject of her visiting Darcy for a few hours again. She knew he sensed what she was thinking. He looked like he still wanted to tell her no. She looked at him through her lashes and gave him her best puppy dog eyes. She could sense that she had him giving in to her. He looked annoyed with himself.

"Why is it that every time you look at me with those eyes of yours I can never tell you 'no'?" He asked, annoyed with himself.

She couldn't help the giggle that escaped from her mouth.

"Because I'm just that irresistible that's why!" She replied cheekily.

He gave her a look of pure exasperation.

"Alright, you can go. But I want to check your wound first." He relented.

She nodded. Thankfully, since the wound healed a bit it was a lot less painful and much easier to clean.

"Fair enough." She agreed.

She thought for a moment and wondered just how exactly they were going to go about doing this. Up until now, she had been totally out of it when he did bandage changes. Now that she was completely functional and coherent it was a completely different thing. She found her shyness returning tenfold at the thought of him seeing her topless, which was just ridiculous considering all of the stuff they had already done together. Then again she wasn't paying attention to…that when they were doing all of that stuff. Holy crap Darcy was right; she DID have sensibilities of a 12 year old girl. She knew that he could sense her embarrassment and he gave her an affectionate look that caused a blush to appear on her face and neck.

"Oh sweetheart, there is nothing to be embarrassed about." He reassured.

She nodded shyly.

"I know." She murmured softly.

Deep down, she knew that he was right but she still couldn't help it. She could tell that he seemed to
sense that and wanted to make this as enjoyable as possible for her. He gestured for her to position herself at the end of the bed. Being sure not to disturb Sapphire too much, she complied and let her bare feet dangle over the side of the bed. He watched her intently for a moment before letting his thumb stroke down her neck stopping briefly on the metal chain of the relic that hung around her neck. He mimicked the movements with his other hand. He let his hands run down her shoulders and stroke long her sides until he reached the bottom of the shirt. He played with the hem for a moment before letting his hands disappear underneath it. He let his hands stroke up her sides languidly bringing the shirt with them. He continued his way up until he reached just below her chest watching the facial expressions she made as he did so.

Automatically, she lifted her arms so he could remove the shirt completely and he did so being careful not to aggravate what was left of her wound. She could sense that he wanted to continue his explorations but knew that looking after the wound was more important at the moment. He did however achieve what he set out to do; she was a lot more comfortable and a lot less embarrassed now. His touched soothed her immensely. Gently, he shifted her forward and carefully removed the bandage covering what was left of her wound. He poked and prodded it for a moment causing her to let out a painful grunt. He gave her an apologetic look and soothed away her pain. She could sense that he was pleased with the progress that her wound was making. After cleaning it a little bit, he massaged more salve into it (which she enjoyed thoroughly) and covered it up with a fresh bandage. He then helped her get the shirt back over her head.

"There, was that so bad?" He teased cheekily.

She rolled her eyes and gave him a playful shove so she could get up off of the bed. She made to head in the direction of the bathroom so she could start getting ready to go see Darcy but he stopped her and whirled her back around to face him. He gave her a playful look and guided her lips to his in a searing kiss which she enjoyed thoroughly. It was filled with promises of what was to come when she returned later. As she tried to part from him reluctantly, he reached down and gave her ass a playful squeeze which caused her to squeak in shock. She would never get used to him doing that.

She rubbed at the spot where he squeezed and gave him an exasperated look.

"You are incorrigible!" She mock complained.

He laughed outright at what she said.

"And you love every minute of it." He countered playfully.

Rolling her eyes, she shooed him away and disappeared into the bathroom. She stripped out of Stephen's shirt and her underwear and hopped into the shower. She made sure to be careful with her bandage not wanting to muck up Stephen's hard work. As she quickly cleaned herself up, she thought about what Stephen just told her. She DID love every minute of it and he knew it. She would never tell him that out loud though; she didn't need to over-inflate his ego more than it already was. Finishing up in the shower, she hopped out and made sure her bandage still looked okay. The last thing she wanted was to have to get him to change it again. Seeing that it was alright, she towed her hair off and wrapped the towel around herself. She brushed her teeth and ran a brush through her crazy hair the best she could. Exiting the bathroom, she went to locate some clothes. Thankfully, Stephen left the room so she could concentrate on getting ready and she would actually get to leave the sanctum sometime soon. He was just so damn distracting and the bond didn't help.

She picked out her Linkin Park shirt to wear this time; she found a clean pair of jeans and changed quickly. She found a pair of clean socks and put them on, she also found her Doc Martins and put them on too. It felt so good to be dressed properly again after days of being stuck lying in bed wearing the same damn thing. Picking up her cell from the bedside table and sent Darcy a text
indicating that everything was a 'go' and asked her if she wanted her to bring anything. She received a text back quickly from Darcy saying everything was a-okay. After texting back Darcy a thumbs up, she placed her cell into her back pocket. She also made sure that she had her sling-ring with her too. She looked at Sapphire sleeping peacefully on Stephen's pillow and debated whether or not to bring her along. In the end, she just decided to let Sapphire sleep and left the room.

She made her way to the foyer eager to open a portal and go see Darcy. She fished her sling-ring from her pocket and put it on. She wasted no time in preforming the movements to open a portal, but nothing happened at first. She frowned, she could feel that something was 'off' with her magic and that worried her. What in the hell was going on with her? Did have something to do with the bite on her shoulder? She would have to tell Stephen when she got back. She didn't want to tell him now because then she would kiss going to see Darcy goodbye if she did. Instead, she kept trying over and over and eventually managed to summon a portal. It was a little unstable and weird looking. Like she could see purple swirling through it, it was so weird looking that she didn't know whether to step through it or not. Eventually, she decided that she had little choice but to do it. She stumbled through the portal and thankfully ended up in Darcy's apartment on the other side. She saw that Darcy was looking at her with a strange look on her face.

"Um, maybe it's just me because I have no idea how magic works but something about that portal didn't look right. Are you okay, shithead?" Darcy asked worriedly.

She nodded. She felt fine but padded herself down and looked for anything out of the ordinary to be sure.

"I have no idea what that was, D. I feel okay but my magic is acting weird. But let's just drop it for okay?" She pleaded.

She wanted to have fun with Darcy, not think about her screwed up magic. Darcy seemed to understand this thankfully.

"Alright, let's get this shit started!" Darcy exclaimed happily.

She and Darcy went to sit at her coffee table where was every kind of junk food imaginable splayed out on it along with an old PS2 sitting there. YES, she couldn't believe Darcy managed to get it up and running again. One of their favorite things to do together was play the game Burnout. They always had so much just crashing cars into other cars for hours on end. The end results of the crashes were always hilarious to watch. They got set up and began to play, cramming junk food into their mouths as they did so; it was just like old times again. It made her forget about her wayward magic for a bit. As they played, Darcy started telling her about her date with Bucky and she could sense her happiness as she did.

They continued to talk until she suddenly felt a spike of arousal that didn't belong to her. She determined that it must have come from Stephen through the bond that they shared. She felt another one shoot through her and for a moment, she wondered just what in the fuck he could be doing, until it hit her. Was he...was he enjoying himself? The very thought of that made her drop the controller in her lap in shock and caused Darcy to look at her weirdly.

"Jesus girlie what in the hell is going on with you?" Darcy asked unsure whether to be worried or curious.

She had no idea how she would explain what was happening to her to Darcy.

"Um, well Stephen and I share a magical bond. So that means I can feel his emotions even when I'm not near him and I think he's..." She trailed off not being able to say the actual word.
"He's what?" Darcy prodded.

She looked at Darcy and tried to say the word. But like every other time she tried to talk about anything remotely sexual she clammed up but Darcy knew her well enough that she worked out exactly what she was trying to say. She watched Darcy burst out laughing her and she gave her a glare.

"Oh gee thanks for the support." She griped.

"OH MY GOD! I am so sorry but that is so hilarious! I get it now! Because of the bond you can feel him mast…” Darcy started but was cut off by her before the whole word came out.

"D, shut up I hate that word!" She whined.

"Alright, alright! How about exercising a little self-love? Better?" She amended.

She nodded.

"Much better." She agreed.

"Anyways, I wouldn't worry about it so much. Besides, that makes great fodder for you to use against him when you get back over there and I don't tell me you aren't thinking of that." Darcy said cheekily.

"D, you are impossible!" She exclaimed in exasperation.

Darcy merely laughed out loud at her exclamation which caused her to roll her mismatched eyes. She picked her controller back up and they resumed crashing their cars and cramming as much junk food down their throats as they could. Several hours later, she felt her sugar high from all the pop she drank begin to wane and her eyes began to grow heavy. She realized that being physically not a hundred percent yet was affecting her ability to deal with her sugar crash as she normal would. She felt herself drift off to sleep.

**Dream/Memory**

Irena was alone in the training grounds trying to master a spell that Mr. Mordo recently taught her. Suddenly, something shifted in the air and she sensed that Mr. Mordo was in the area with her but something wasn’t right. She turned around and sure enough he was in the room with her but something about him was off. She sensed that his magic felt off and his eyes looked unusually dark.

Wordlessly, he approached her. He held out his hand and a glowing light appeared there. She knew he was preforming some kind of spell. He lifted his glowing hand and pointed it at her heart. What was he going to do to her?

Before he could go through with spell, her 'Mother' suddenly appeared in front of her she could sense the fury rolling off of her in waves. Mr. Mordo somehow ended up on the ground several feet away.

"You will not touch her!" Her 'Mother' roared angrily.

**End Dream/Memory**

Darcy

Darcy realized very quickly that Irena had fallen asleep. She was sitting there with her mouth open,
her legs crossed and the controller sitting in her lap. Something she only ever saw Irena ever manage to pull off. Not that she could blame her this time because she had been through hell a few days ago and her everything was probably still off with her. Suddenly, she noticed that Irena began to fidget in her sleep. A sure sign that she had started dreaming, and it probably was about something that wasn't very good. In the past when they used to crash all the time together before she left the tower, she didn't know how many times she got the shit kicked out of her from sharing a bed with Irena. Irena was a terrible sleeper.

Suddenly, she could see things vibrating around the room and realized that the shit was about to hit the fan. She seriously debated about going to find Bucky for a moment but realized very quickly that she needed to get Stephen over the apartment now. Fishing through the couch, she managed to come up with Irena's cell phone. She could only hope that Stephen's number was programmed in there. Sure enough, she found it. Thank god. She clicked on the number and pressed call.

The phone and rang and rang. Darcy began to panic, just where in the fuck was he? Finally after three rings he picked up.

"Sweetheart whatever is the matter? Is everything alright?" Stephen's deep voice asked over the phone dripping with concern.

If the situation wasn't so dire, she would have thought his concern adorable. Just as she was about to respond, an object came whizzing over her head and she ducked just in time.

"Um, it's Darcy and I have a huge problem here. I really need you to portal your ass over here like now!" She tried to explain, letting out a high pitched squeak as she had to dodge another flying object.

Thankfully, Stephen seemed to immediately seem to understand what was happening, she realized it must be the bond. Hence they earlier concern.

"Alright Darcy, hang on a moment and I will be there as quickly as I can." He said.

He hung up the phone before she could respond and not a minute later, she saw an orange portal begin materialize in the middle of her apartment. She watched Stephen step out of it and strided over to Irena with purpose. He completely ignored all of the objects flying around the room. She watched him bend down in front of the couch and wake Irena carefully. As soon as her mismatched eyes popped open, she threw her arms around Stephen and buried her face into his neck. He hugged Irena back and tried to soothe her. As he did so, the objects started dropping to the ground.

Darcy watched the whole scene playing in front of her with softened eyes hoping that one day her and Bucky's relationship would be just like that.
To Accept the Unacceptable

Chapter Notes

A/N: And the Chapters continue!

Irena

Sitting cross-legged on the table in the 'practice room', Irena let out a soft sigh. She came to the 'practice room' with the intention of seeing just how messed up her magic was. However, she found herself unable to actually summon anything for fear of what would happen if she did. She looked down at the relic hanging around her neck and saw that it still sort of tinged purple. She tried to keep her emotions from going haywire because she didn't want Stephen to know what was going on just yet. After a few more minutes of debating, she decided that she would just have to get all her lady balls in a row and just summon SOMETHING. She decided on something simple. She concentrated as hard as she could and tried to summon a butterfly. It took a hell of a lot of effort but she managed to summon a butterfly. It looked purple and distorted just like the portal did. She frowned and dismissed the butterfly. She suspected that this had something to do with the bite on her shoulder. She remembered Stephen telling her to not let the faceless ones into the sanctum for fear of what their evil might taint. She wondered if getting bitten by one caused her magic to become tainted. If this was the case, was there a way to reverse it? She loathed the thought of having her magic stuck this way forever.

Looking back down at the relic around her neck, a light bulb went off inside of her head. Her magic merged with that of the relic so because of that her tainted magic must have affected the magic of the relic too. Wasn't that just dandy. As she sat and debated just what in the hell she was going to tell Stephen, her mind drifted to the dream memory she had when she fell asleep on Darcy's couch. She felt bad just thinking of the incident. She ended up destroying damn near all of Darcy's apartment by accident. Any other sane person would have told her to get lost and never come back again. Darcy on other hand didn't even bat an eyelash at it. After she had calmed down some, Stephen had magicked everything back to the way it was. The whole time, Darcy was more concerned about her than the apartment. Honestly, some days she wondered what in the hell she would do without Darcy.

Letting out another soft sigh, her thoughts drifted to what the dream memory was about. 'Mr. Mordo' had cornered her in the training grounds and tried to use a spell on her. Which spell she did not know. But she had the feeling that it something to do with trying to steal her magic but not in the typical sense. She had a feeling that he knew that he wouldn't be able to wield the dragon's tear without her. So maybe he was trying to use mind control on her? That thought caused a frisson of fear to shoot through her. She was thankful that her 'mother' had gotten to her in time and saved her.

She could only imagine what would have happened if she didn't. She thought about the magical signature she felt during the battle with the faceless ones. She knew without a doubt that it belonged to him. She seriously began to wonder if he summoned the faceless ones in an ill thought out attempt to capture her. Clearly, he hadn't taken into account just how dumb and slow they actually were so instead she ended up getting bitten instead of captured. She didn't know whether she should be thankful for that or not.

Of course for the moment everything that she was thinking was all just speculation. Even though she
was a hundred percent certain that she felt him there, she couldn't actually prove that he was after her. For all she knew, he summoned the faceless ones just to make Stephen's life a living hell. Regardless, it freaked her the hell out and it drove her to want to fix her magic before anything bad DID end up happening because with her luck it absolutely would. In order for her to figure out what the hell was going on with it in the first place, she knew that she would need Stephen and Wong's help.

'Yippie, what a fun conversation this is going to be! NOT!' She thought to herself.

Forcing herself to get up off of the table, she exited the practice room and went to go find Stephen and Wong. Luckily, she didn't have to look very far because she heard them talking in the library. She entered the library and found them debating heatedly about something or another. She couldn't help but look at the scene in front of with affection. It was always hilarious to watch Stephen and Wong fighting like an old married couple. Gently, she cleared her throat to get their attention. Both men turned to look at her curiously.

"Um guys, I think we have a problem." She started.

As soon as the word 'problem' came out of her mouth, she felt Stephen's protectiveness flare to life though the bond and he was all over her. Before she could even blink, he was at her side checking her over.

"What kind of problem sweetheart?" He asked.

She could sense his worry mixed in with the protectiveness.

"Look at the Dragon's Tear." She said, lifting up the relic for him to examine.

He looked at its coloration and frowned. She watched him examine it more closely being careful not to accidently strangle her as it was still clasped around her neck. Wong also came closer to get a look at what the problem was. He frowned when he saw the relic too.

"Well this is certainly strange. Is the rest of your magic affected too?" He asked.

She bit at her lips and nodded.

"Everything I summon is purple and distorted. It takes so long to summon anything too. It feels like I am back to square one." She explained.

Hearing this caused Stephen's frown to deepen. She knew that he could also sense how much this whole thing was freaking her out.

"Sweetheart, I know this is scaring you but in order to try and solve the problem we need you to summon something so we can see what is going on." Stephen explained gently.

He moved his hand from the relic to the top of her head and started stroking it through her messy locks in order to soothe her. It worked wonders and she began to calm a little. She inwardly sighed.

She really, really didn't want to summon crap all right now but knew she had little choice in the matter they needed to see what was happening in order to find some kind of solution to the problem. She forced herself to step back from Stephen (she really didn't want to) so she had ample room to summon in case everything went to shit. Again, she decided to summon something simple. She thought of the little blue kitten she summoned when she first got the hang of summoning things. It wasn't too big so if something went sideways, she could dismiss it quickly. She concentrated as hard as she could and tried to summon the tiny kitten, it took a few tried but she managed to do it.
Both Stephen and Wong were staring at it in shock, it look just as she described earlier. It was purple and all distorted. Its eyes even looked weird. As Stephen and Wong were examining it, she suddenly felt a stabbing pain in shoulder where the wound was and it caused her to lose the summon.

"Argh!" She yelled in pain.

She tried to grope at her shoulder, but Stephen shooed her hand away. He wasted no time in moving her tank top strap out of the way. She had decided to wear her work out clothes because she felt so shitty and they were comfortable. He peeled away the bandage to make sure the wound was okay. While Stephen did this, Wong disappeared to the back of the library to go look for...something. She could sense that Stephen still seemed satisfied with how the wound looked. So what the hell just happened to her? Sensing her fear, Stephen tried to soothe her. She saw that Wong quickly returned with a giant book in his hands. He dropped the book onto the table and started flipping through it. She and Stephen approached Wong to check out what kind of book he was flipping through. She stood next to Wong looking over his shoulder while Stephen sidled up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. Because she was much shorter than he was, he was able to rest his chin on her head and read the book. She could sense his need to have her close to him and she was only too happy to oblige.

It turned out the book was a lexicon on magical monsters. She knew that Wong was searching for an entry on the faceless ones. It took Wong no time at all to find what he was looking for. She and Stephen read the entry with him.

**Faceless Ones**: The faceless ones are lackeys summoned by sorcerers that have lost their hearts to darkness. Some sorcerers consider them to be demons. They are not hard to summon but they notoriously hard to control. They can be considered a little dumb and slow but they have a nasty venomous bite. When bitten, a Sorcerer may experience hallucinations or extreme pain or a combination of the two. Sorcerers with extremely strong magic that have been bitten may encounter something called 'tainting of their magic'. In these rare cases, the sorcerer may experience extreme difficulty while summoning their magic. These symptoms include, extreme pain from the bite sight while summoning, and discoloration or distortion of summoned objects. In most cases, the symptoms will cease as the wound heals. In extremely rare cases the effects are permanent.

After hearing all that she couldn't decide if it made her feel better or worse. What would happen if her magic didn't get better? Would Stephen even want her then? Would she be of use to anybody? She knew that Stephen could sense that her emotions were spiraling out of control. He gently turned her to face him, his large hands cupped either side of her face and he forced her to look him eyes. He made sweeping motions on her cheeks with his thumbs.

"Sweet little kitten, please calm down. No matter what happens you'll always have me you know this. The problem will probably go away on its own anyway." He reassured.

She knew that he was right and she tried to calm herself down. The problem would probably end up disappearing on its own. She could sense that he knew that she was calming down some.

"That's my good girl." He murmured.

Wong made a noise of agreement.

"He's right you know. There is probably like a ninety nine percent chance you'll be fine. You just have to stick it out until then that's all." He agreed.

She knew that they were right but felt that she could use a little time to herself to deal with her emotions.
"Hey, I am going to go get a coffee, is that okay?" When she asked this, she was addressing Stephen more so than Wong.

Again, Stephen looked like he wanted to object however Wong gave him a look. Wong knew as much as she did that keeping her cooped up in the Sanctum wouldn't do her or anybody else any good for that matter. She sensed that Stephen was relenting.

"Alright sweetheart, you can go but please, please be careful." He ordered softly.

A part of her wanted to put up a huge stink about how protective he was being but she knew that considering what he had been through the last few days he had the right to be.

She nodded to him.

"I promise I'll be careful." She murmured.

He gave her a tender look and kissed her softly. Wong made gagging noises in the background causing her to giggle and Stephen to give him the stink eye. Reluctantly, she parted from him and left the library. She decided that she would just stay in her exercise clothes because they were comfy and she didn't feel like changing but she would like to grab something to throw over top. She went to Stephen's room and located her hoody. When she went to the tower to retrieve more tools, she ended up retrieving more clothes as well. She was certain that stupid Courtney had thrown all the stuff she left behind away when she used her room but instead she just shoved them in a box and just left it in the corner of the room thank crap. She just ended up taking the entire box with her back to Sanctum along with her tools.

After throwing her hood on, she left Stephen's room and made her way to the foyer of the Sanctum. As she was about to leave the building, she was bombarded by both the cloak and Sapphire. She could sense that they thought that she was leaving and never coming back. She wondered why they thought that when she remembered earlier when she was finding out what was going on with her magic that she did entertain the notion to leave briefly but dismissed it as soon as she thought of it. She knew that leaving permanently would solve shit all and more than likely wreck both her and Stephen. She wondered if they both managed to sense what she was thinking for that brief moment.

She was shocked that she could hear them trying to talk to her inside of her head. She couldn't make out a lot because they were saying a lot and both trying to talk to her at the same time but she did catch one thing.

"Mistress cannot leave master." They said.

Her mismatched eyes softened at that.

"Hush you two, I'm not leaving forever I just want a coffee." She reassured.

Tell them that seemed to calm them down a bit, but it was a few more minutes before they let her leave the Sanctum. Before she left, she made sure that she had her phone and iPod. After she left the Sanctum, she pulled the hood of her hoodie up over her head and ambled down the street to Alex's little café. When she entered the café, she pouted when she saw that Alex was not working. Regardless of who made her drink, it usually always turned out decent but she had been looking forward to talking with Alex.

'Oh well, can't do a damn thing about it.' She thought to herself.

She ordered herself her usual iced coffee made with chocolate milk instead of white and waited patiently for it to be made. After waiting for a few minutes, the kind lady behind the counter handed
her drink to her and she paid for it. She left the café and after debating with herself for a few minutes decided to take a walk to Central Park. She knew that it would help her to calm down and work through the rest of her emotions. Placing her ear buds in her ears, she picked a song and made her way to Central Park. Along the way, she would periodically take pulls from her iced coffee. Once she got to Central Park, she found a bench and plopped down into it and continued to enjoy her sweet drink.

She let out a long sigh as she tried to sift through her emotions. She felt as if her magic had been violated by being bitten by the faceless one and she hated it so much. It reminded her of what happened the day she broke up with Toby. That incident gave her the exact same feeling of being violated.

Memory

Irena tried to push Toby away as she felt his insistent hands roaming all over her body. He was trying to touch her in ways that she didn't want. His hands tried to find their way inside of her pants and she tried to push him away, hard but he was stronger. This was not how she pictured what this stuff would be like. Finally having enough, she forced his hands out of her pants and away from her.

"I said no Toby now get the HELL out!" She yelled.

An angry look on formed on Toby's face at being told to get out.

"If you really think that you can tell me what I can and cannot do you, you are fucking dreaming. You are mine end of story." Toby snarled back.

She felt her powers begin to activate at what he said. Perhaps it was it defense mechanism she did not know. She felt the blue energy from around her palm. She could feel it crackling with power. She lifted her arm and faced her palm toward the direction that Toby was standing with every intention of letting loose the energy gathered there. However, before she could, the bedroom door swung open and in stepped Darcy looking absolutely livid. The distraction was enough to cause the energy she had around her palm to dissipate.

"Just what in the fuck is going on in here?" Darcy snarled angrily.

Toby had decency to look a little fearful like he rightfully should.

"Toby, do as she says and get the fuck out before I tell Tony on your worthless piece of shit ass." She threatened.

She saw that Toby was about to protest until Darcy stomped up to him and sucker punched him right in the face. His hands immediately flew to his bloody and broken nose. She stood there completely shocked that Darcy had the gonads to do that. It was enough to finally make him leave. It was typical coward man behavior. It took no time at all for the gravity of the situation to sink in and she couldn't stop the tears when they started. She slid down onto the floor and Darcy sat down with her. Darcy hugged her until the tears slowed.

"Please don't tell Tony." She begged.

She watched Darcy let out a long sigh but she nodded and complied.

End Memory

To this day, only she and Darcy knew of that incident. But the feelings she had back then were the same she had now. She felt as if a part of her was violated. She knew that in time as her magic
improved, the feeling would go away but right now it really sucked. Suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted by something snuffling at her feet. She saw that it was a big black lab now normally she didn't go around petting strange dogs but she could sense that this dog meant her no harm.

"Where did you come from?" She asked the dog.

The dog of course couldn't answer back but her question was answered quickly anyway. She could hear someone yelling a short distance away.

"Cinder what are you doing? Leave the poor girl alone!" Somebody yelled.

Looking at the dog, she immediately understood where the name Cinder came from. The dog's eyes reminded her of cinders burning slowly in a fire. As the owner got closer, she realized that she knew them. Dr. West came into view and she looked heavenward. Some deity up there was really having the time of their lives messing around with her.

'You have to got to be kidding me!' She thought with exasperation.

He approached her with a look on his face told her that she was in for a whole bunch of trouble.

"Well hello there, pretty girl." He greeted.

Since Tony didn't raise her to be an asshole…most of the time, she did her best to remain friendly towards him even if she wanted to tell him to go suck a nut.

"Hello, Dr. West." She greeted back politely.

"Nice dog by the way." She added.

She was telling the truth when she said that. Cinder was a very nice dog. It was just a shame she had such a pompous asshole owner. Dr. West preened a little at the compliment and she fought the urge to roll her eyes.

"Thank you, so do you mind me asking why you are out here all alone on a park bench, having trouble in paradise?" He assumed.

She could barely keep the frown off of her face at the question. She knew what he was referring to when he asked her that and it pissed her right the hell off. She was about to say it was none of his damn business why she was out here when she suddenly felt something shift in her magic. Her mismatched eyes got large. Stephen was coming and he was not happy. She could feel his anger and possessiveness.

'Oh holy crap balls almighty!' She thought in shock.

Sure enough, Stephen fell out of the sky a little ways away and he looked pissed right off. He wasted no time in approaching the scene and he placed her behind himself. He looked like he was ready to vaporize Dr. West on the spot. Crap, he must have felt her fluctuating emotions through the bond and thought that she was in some kind of trouble.

"What is the meaning of this?" Stephen asked angrily.

Dr. West snorted and shook his head. Clearly, he was not aware of the situation he found himself in.

"Take it easy Strange, she and I were just getting to know each other a little better that's all." Dr. West stated with a grin.
If the situation hadn't turned so serious, she would have faceplamed. She swore that Dr. West was trying to get himself killed on purpose. This was just like Toby all over again. She could sense that Stephen's magic was getting out of control and she needed to do something before he did something would regret. She could also sense the dog's fear too, this entire situation was getting out of hand and she needed to put a stop to it. Gently, she moved from behind him and placed herself in front of him. She turned to face him and started stroking his chest. It was enough to move his attention from Dr. West to her thankfully.

"Come on Stephen, calm yourself. He isn't even worth it." She soothed.

She could feel him calming down some but she could still feel his possessiveness and protectiveness pulsing through the bond. He was still looking at her with darkened eyes but not in a way that scared her. Suddenly, he literally swept her off of her feet and into his arms. She let out a shocked shriek at being displaced. Realizing that they were levitating away, her shriek increased in volume. Immediately, she wrapped her arms around his neck and buried her face into his neck. Oh how she hated heights. She could feel his amusement through the bond bleeding through the possessiveness and protectiveness if she wasn't so petrified she would have given him a piece of her mind. It took them no time at all to reach the Sanctum. When they did, he let her down but refused to part from her. Instead, he lowered his head to hers and gave her a searing kiss. As he did this, he gave the cloak a magical command to disengage from him. Somehow, they managed to make to his bedroom without parting much. Stephen wasted no time in trying to lift her hoodie over her head; she lifted her arms to help him. She could sense just how much he wanted to show her to whom she belonged.

She thought about the conversation she had with Darcy at her apartment. It made her want to channel her inner Darcy and turn the tables on him a little bit. She really wanted to try and get over her shyness with all of this stuff. Instead of letting him back her toward his bed, she shifted them so she could back him toward the bed instead. She could sense his curiosity and he was looking at her intently waiting eagerly to see what she was going to do. She wasted no time in straddling him. She could feel just how much he desired her in more ways than one. This time, while she could feel herself heating up at the thought of it she didn't let it deter her. Instead, she rolled her hips against his experimentally and was surprised at the intensity of the sparks of desire that shot through her that the friction that it caused as she did so. His hands automatically flew to her hips to keep her in place and she saw that his eyes were black with desire.

"So naughty, yet still so innocent. You are mine." He purred possessively, stroking her hips.

She giggled and lowered her lips to his right ear licking the shell as she did so.

"I'm not the only one who's naughty. I know what you do when I'm not around." She countered playfully.

His eyes widened when he realized what she was referring to. He let out a low, desire filled growl.

"Little minx, you will be the death of me yet." He growled lowly.

She knew that after he said that it was the end of playtime. He wasted no time showing her to whom she belonged to and just how much she was loved.

Neither she nor Stephen noticed the wound on her shoulder glowing blue through the bandage that covered it or the relic around her neck glowing a soft blue instead of the purple that it once was.
To Strain an Unbreakable Bond

Chapter Notes

A/N: And another one bites the dust! Thanks again for all of the kudos(s) and subscriptions! They really mean a lot!

Stephen

Stretching languidly, Stephen opened his eyes to the most glorious sight. Irena was lying on her side facing him. At some point in the night, she must have tried to kick the sheets off because they were all bunched around her hips giving him quite the view. He shifted into his side and tucked one hand underneath the pillow that he was currently using so he could just watch her sleep for a bit. He used his free hand to gently push her messy, wayward curls out of her face; they seemed messier than normal. He supposed the proper term for it would be 'sex hair' and he thoroughly enjoyed how it looked on her. He saw that her freckled cheeks were still slightly flushed and couldn't help the shit-eating that formed on his face. As some point in the night, he woke her up for another round to which she gladly complied to. She was right, he WAS insatiable but it wasn't his fault that she was so damn delectable. Immediately, an image of her straddling him popped into his mind and it caused a spike of desire to shoot through him. He tried to quell it for fear of waking her up, she was spent and he wanted her to sleep. He shook himself of the thought for now and let his stormy blue eyes drift from her face to her neck.

He decided that it would be a good time to check one her wound while she was knocked right out. He pushed her curls a little further out of the way to get a better view of her shoulder, as he did this he noticed that the Dragon's Tear had returned to its normal blue hue and was glowing softly once again. He couldn't help but be intrigued; he thought it would take far longer for it to return to normal. Gently, he peeled back the bandage covering her wound and was shocked to see that it was mostly healed. Far more than it should be at this point. Now he was really intrigued. He wondered if it had something to do with her being the Descendant of the Guardians. He wanted to test that theory later and he also wanted to see if the taint in her magic had lessened as well. He decided that the wound had healed enough to keep it open from now on.

As for right now, he decided he wanted to take another crack at trying to make her breakfast because she really seemed to like it despite the fact that he and Wong really made a mess of it and he really wanted to please her. This time though he would stick to something simple, fruit and toast. Even with his screwed up hands he knew he could handle that. Plus, if they were going to practice her magic today a big breakfast would do them no good. Turning his attention back to Irena, he saw that she was shaking a little and he looked at her tenderly. He could sense that she was cold. He pulled up the sheets to her shoulders and her shaking lessened a little. He stroked the side of her face softly with his thumb and placed a warm kiss on her temple.

As carefully as he could, he extricated himself from the bed doing his best to avoid disturbing her. He headed to the bathroom to clean himself up. After having a quick shower, he wrapped a towel around his waist and cleaned his teeth. He checked for five o'clock shadow as well, there were certain things that he still had to have a certain way and being well groomed was one of them. He couldn't stand it when he had five o'clock shadow. After getting rid of the five o'clock shadow, he left the bathroom to go and get dressed. He chose his 'sorcerer garb' as Irena affectionately called it.
Once he was dressed, he made sure his hair was perfectly in place and once he was satisfied with his appearance he opened the bedroom door ready to head to the kitchen. However, as he opened the door his cloak shot through the door along with little Sapphire chasing it and he shook his head in exasperation.

'What a pair those two make.' He thought to himself in exasperation.

His cloak and Sapphire wasted no time in going to Irena. His cloak tried to wrap around her and Sapphire curled up next her head on her pillow. He had kept them purposely locked out of the bedroom the previous night because either he would have to put up with Sapphire's eerie yellow eyes staring at him the whole time he and Irena engaged in 'extracurricular activities' like some deranged cat or have to put up with his cloak trying to slap his hand away every time he tried to touch her. He wanted neither of those so he just kept them both locked out of the bedroom. Of course Irena just thought the whole thing was hilarious.

Giving Irena one last tender look, he left the bedroom and headed to the kitchen. He wasted no time in getting breakfast together. He hands were a little shaky but no more than what he was used to. If he managed to shave this morning, he knew he could handle a knife no problem. He managed to cut the fruit with little difficulty. It looked sloppy as hell but he was pretty damn proud of himself that he managed to do without cutting a finger off. As he was putting the toast in the toaster, he could sense that she was waking up.

'What great timing that is.' He thought, smiling.

Sure enough, just as the toast popped Irena entered the kitchen. She had Sapphire perched on her shoulder. She had her hair up in a messy bun and wore a thick strapped black tank top that said 'bite me' across the chest along with a pair of yoga type pants and her running shoes. He couldn't help but stare a little bit; neither the tank top nor the pants did anything to hide her curvy figure which he found liked very much. However at the moment, he was happy to concentrate on the beautiful, radiant smile she currently wore for him.

"Hello, beautiful." He greeted warmly.

Irena

Of all the things that Stephen has done for her so far, this had to be her favorite. Beside the fact that cooking wasn't his forte, his hands made doing things like cutting fruit extremely hard for him to do. But he did it anyway because he knew it would make her happy. She had no idea what she did to get so damn lucky. She wasted no time in entering his personal space; she wrapped her arms around his waist. She stood on her tippy toes and placed a warm kiss on his jaw. She could sense his contentment.

"Hello yourself, handsome." She replied cheekily.

"This is perfect by the way, thank you." She added, smiling happily.

Making a contented noise, he wrapped his arms around her waist and he lowered his head to kiss her good and properly. She let out a happy noise.

"You are welcome, my sweet little kitten." He said, smiling softly at her.

As she parted from him, Sapphire suddenly jumped from her shoulder to his and started tasting his cheek with her little forked tongue. He looked like he didn't even know what to do with the situation and she couldn't help but burst out laughing.
"What is this all about?" He asked, confused.

She started laughing harder.

"Oh Stephen, she trying to give you kisses!" She exclaimed, giggling uncontrollably.

Stephen made a face and tolerated it for a little bit longer before gently shooing Sapphire back over to her shoulder. She gave him an exasperated look as if to say 'don't be such a grumpy pants' and he merely rolled his eyes back at her. She watched him use his magic to levitate their meal to the little table in the corner of the kitchen. They both sat down at the table and began to eat. From time to time, she would feed a piece of fruit to Sapphire. They sat in a companionable silence until Stephen broke it.

"Sweetheart, I would like to test your magic a bit today if that is okay with you?" He asked curiously.

"I saw that the Dragon's Tear returned to normal so I wanted to see if the taint in your magic has lessened." He explained.

She nodded in understanding.

"Sure, sounds good to me. I could use the practice." She replied happily.

"Excellent!" He said with a smile on his face.

After finishing their meal in a companionable silence, they cleaned everything up and headed to the 'practice room'. Before they entered, she gave a command to go play; it was way easier to concentrate when the tiny dragon wasn't wreaking havoc all around the room. For some reason, Sapphire decided that she was going to be very stubborn about it so it took a few tries but she finally got her to go play. Not quite knowing what the deal was that was, she inwardly shrugged and entered the 'practice room' with Stephen following closely behind her. Walking up to the wooden table in the center of the room, she plopped down onto it and waited to see what Stephen wanted her to summon.

She looked to Stephen curiously.

"So what would you like me to summon?" She asked curiously.

She watched Stephen think for a moment. A few moments later she could sense that something had popped into his head.

"Do you think you are up to summoning your fans?" He questioned.

She thought for a moment and nodded.

"Sure, I don't see why not." She agreed.

Getting up from the table, she concentrated really hard and while it still took a bit of effort she managed to summon her fans. They still looked a little tainted but they were mostly blue once more. She let out a sigh of relief and thanked every god above that the taint was going away. To make sure, she decided to summon a butterfly. Again, it took a little bit but she managed summon one and it also looked a whole lot better. It looked a whole lot more blue and a whole lot less like it came out of a Tim Burton film. She could sense that Stephen was pleased with her progress too.

"Very good Sweetheart, everything looks so much better!" He praised.
Stephen's praise made her feel good.

"Thanks! I feel better too!" She said happily.

She was telling the truth, seeing that her magic was in fact returning to normal made her feel so much better. She saw that Stephen was looking at her intently and she looked back at him curiously. She could sense through the bond that he was thinking about something.

"What are you thinking about?" She asked him curiously.

He looked a little sheepish at begin caught. Clearly, he was thinking about something that she might not like.

"When I was checking your wound, I noticed something a little peculiar. It was far more healed then it should be. This leads me to wonder if you could learn to heal." He explained.

She looked at Stephen with intrigue. That could be an interesting addition to her arsenal of spells and weapons. It could be useful in battle too but how could she go about learning such a thing? She wondered if it had something to do with her being The Descendant of The Guardians and if it did, could she and Stephen find more information on it? Looking at Stephen, she could sense that there were still thoughts bouncing around in his head.

"What else are you thinking about?" She asked knowingly.

She watched him frown. Okay so this was the part that she wouldn't like.

"Well, I was also thinking about seeing how far we could push your transformations now that the relic is back to normal." He explained.

It was her turn to frown. She didn't like the sound of that. It was hard enough to transform halfway, she couldn't even imagine what it would feel like to transform fully. That would be an insane amount of power pumping through her veins. She had a feeling that everything would go to shit before she could even blink. She voiced this to Stephen.

"Um Stephen, I don't think I'm ready to try and wield THAT much power yet. I am happy to learn more about healing though." She said, hoping to make him shift gears back to healing instead of the relic.

Unfortunately, it didn't work. In getting to know Stephen, she found that once Stephen got an idea stuck in his head it was impossible to get it out until he saw it through and this was no exception.

"Sweetheart, I just want to test some things out. I promise you nothing bad will happen." He tried to reassure.

She inwardly sighed. No matter how much Stephen tried to reassure her it still didn't make her feel any more comfortable with doing it. She just wasn't ready to try and wield that much power yet and she was getting aggravated that Stephen wasn't respecting that just so he could satisfy his own curiosities about the relic. She knew that he could sense her feelings over the bond and he was choosing to ignore them. This aggravated her more and she was about to voice this when she felt something shift in the magic of the sanctum. She knew that Stephen could feel it too. Somebody had entered the sanctum but they weren't a foe, she could feel that much. As the person approached the stairs leading to the basement of the Sanctum, she could hear whistling. She determined that it was Clint, only he whistled like that. Clearly, he brought her something that she needed to fix. She turned to Stephen and he was looking at her with a look that she really didn't like. The look was the epitome of 'you better believe that we are nowhere near finished talking about this'. Before she could say
anything about it, he wordlessly left her standing there in shock. She could not BELIEVE that just transpired. She wondered if this was what Stephen was like before he found Kamar-Taj. He only seemed to care about what he wanted and not about what she needed. She tried to put the feelings in the back of her mind so she could help Clint fix whatever needed fixing without alerting him that something was the matter with her. Because that was all she needed at the moment.

'So this is what Stephen was like when he was an asshole.' She thought sadly.

She was certain everything just felt more amplified because of the bond but it made her feel really shitty. She watched Clint enter the room, holding his quiver in one hand. She could see that something was the matter with it right away. As soon as he saw her, his face fell and she knew that could tell something was off. Oh lord almighty.

"Hey tootsie roll, is everything okay?" He asked worriedly.

She chewed at her lips trying to decide just how to answer that.

"Yeah Clint, everything is fine. Stephen and I just had a small disagreement that's all." She explained.

Clint looked at her like he didn't quite believe her but let it go thankfully.

"Alrightie then, but if you wanna talk about it I'm here for you." He reassured.

She looked at him gratefully.

"Thanks Clint, I really appreciate that. So what did you do to your quiver?" She asked curiously.

From what she was seeing, it looked pretty messed up. He looked sheepish at that question and held it up for her to look at. It looked like it had been squished all to hell. How she would get it to dispense arrows again, she did not know. She couldn't for the life of her figure out just how he managed to destroy it THAT badly. She looked to him for answers and he merely gave her a sheepish look back. While Clint was mostly retired now, he did still go on a mission from time to time.

"Don't even ask." He muttered.

She rolled her mismatched eyes at him.

"Can you fix it, tootsie roll?" He asked hopefully.

She frowned but nodded. What her asshole brothers put their crap through was beyond her.

"I think so, do you mind hanging around here until I am done fixing it?" She asked curiously.

He nodded eagerly.

"I was hoping for that, I would love to catch up with you." He replied laughing.

She smiled happily.

"Good." She agreed.

She went to retrieve her tools and got to work and they talked about all kinds of things.

Mostly, she could sense that Clint wanted to make sure that Stephen was treating her well to which
she couldn't help but inwardly roll her eyes at, big brother syndrome much? She told him that
Stephen was in fact treating her very well with the exception of this afternoon and she was sure that
they would work it out. As they talked, the topic turned to her magic and magical spells.

"Soo tootsie roll, how are the spells coming along? "He asked curiously.

"Pretty good, I'm not blowing up crap anymore and I've got the hang of summoning most everything
now. It feels pretty damn good to gain some control." She admitted.

"And you have the bonus of getting into merlin's pants." Clint added jokingly.

"Clint! Do you want me to screw up your quiver worse instead of fix it for you?" She griped.

Instantly, Clint held up his hands in defeat. That quiver was like his baby, he would do anything for
it.

"Alright, alright, you win!" He said, giving in.

She couldn't help but laugh.

"Oh my god Clint, you love this thing more than your own children!" She teased.

Clint looked at her with mock outrage at was she just said.

"Oh I do NOT!" He countered sticking his tongue out at her.

She rolled her mismatched eyes at him. Clint could act like such a 4 year old sometimes.

As she continued to put wires and parts back into place in Clint's quiver, she thought about what
happened to Clint when Loki messed with his mind all of those years ago. She never personally
witnessed what took place because she was quite young and Tony personally made sure that she was
nowhere near the tower when it happened. But he did tell her an edited version of what took place
one day when she became curious about it. She remembered him telling her that Loki aimed his
sceptre at his heart. He told Clint that he 'had heart' and that was the last thing that Clint could
remember of the whole ordeal. In her dream, 'Mr. Mordo' aimed his spell at her heart. She was
certain that he was trying to use a mind control spell on her. In one of the books that Stephen had
given her to read all of those days ago, she read that a sorcerer's magic was connected to both heart
and soul. She also read that because of this that mind control spells were notoriously hard to undo.
With her unique magic, it might even be impossible. She could only imagine what damage she
would do if Mordo actually managed to get a hold of her.

After she was done fixing Clint's quiver, she would have to talk to Stephen about it if he would even
listen to her. Somehow, she managed to get Clint's quiver working again. She handed it back to him
and he gave her a bone-crushing hug in return.

"Thank you, toosie roll!" He exclaimed happily.

She couldn't help but laugh a little a Clint's giddiness.

"You're welcome, come on I'll walk you to the door." She laughed.

She and Clint left the 'practice room' and she led Clint back to the foyer of the Sanctum. They
continued to talk as she led him to entrance of the Sanctum. After giving him a huge hug, she bid
him goodbye with the promise of visiting more often. As she turned around, she was shocked to
Stephen sitting on the couch looking at her with a look that she did not like at all. In fact it freaked
her out a little. She could sense through the bond that he was not happy. She approached him and sat down next to him. He didn't reach out to cuddle her into his side like he normally would and she didn't like it.

"Stephen I…” She started but was cut off by him.

"Irena, what do I have to do to get you to trust me fully?" He barked.

She was shocked by his outburst. This wasn't about trust this was about trying to get him to understand that she just wasn't comfortable trying to tap into that much magic yet.

"It not about trust Stephen! Of course I trust you, I'm petrified to tap into that much magic because I don't think I'm ready to handle it yet and I think everything is going to go to hell!" She tried to explain.

"The hell it isn't about trust! You know I won't let anything harm you and I will always protect you from anything and everything and you know full well that if something were to go wrong I would never force you to continue to do it just to satisfy own selfish curiosities like a giant asshole would. But clearly, that's what you thought I would do because you don't trust me and let's not even mention the fact that you refuse to tell me what exactly you sensed when you were fighting the faceless ones. So how exactly am I to help you when you refuse to let me in to do it?” He yelled.

She couldn't help but flinch at the tone of his voice and the fact that he read her thoughts. That made everything ten times worse. He had never ever once used that tone of voice with her. He could feel his anger pulsing through the bond, it was full of fury and it was raging. For the first ever, it was directed at her. It made her sick. She couldn't help what started spewing out of her mouth.

"Stephen, I'm sorry okay! I'm sorry that I'm petrified of the magic inside of me. I'm sorry that I'm petrified that one day soon, Karl Mordo is going to come and mind control me into doing a lot of terrible crap because he is the one that tried to unleash the faceless ones into the sanctum. I am sorry that I was too scared to tell you that Okay? I am terrified if I unleash all of the power in the relic that he will find me, mess with my mind and cause the end of the universe!” She yelled back.

Stephen sat there flabbergasted as she continued to rant.

"By the way, it's kinda hard to trust people when you've been screwed over every day of your life until the age of 10. It's a takes a long time to undo all of that damage just ask Tony or anybody at the tower for that matter so I'm sorry for not trusting you fast enough okay?” She hissed angrily.

She was so hurt and angry that she just had to get the HELL out of the Sanctum before she something that she would regret. Sapphire tried to jump on her shoulder to come with her but she told her to stay put. She didn't have her sling ring on her so decided to just to hell with it. She left the Sanctum, slamming the door angrily behind her. She tapped into the power of the relic, she felt herself transforming and she flew away as fast as she could. She didn't even bother sparing a second glance at Stephen.

Stephen couldn't believe he just let that happen. He knew better, he could sense through the bond that she was uncomfortable about tapping into the relic fully and instead of understanding that he lashed out at her about trust. Was he really that bloody thick?

He knew that trust was a sore subject for her and that she was really trying hard and that's how he repaid her. As the gravity of situation weighed down on him, he put his head in his hands and ran his
hands through his hair. He let out an annoyed growl, he was so pissed off at himself he couldn't even think properly. He didn't even know how he was going to do it, but he had to fix the damage he did somehow. He could feel her emotions through the bond even though she was nowhere near him. They made him sick.

He had to fix this and he would do anything to do it because it would literally kill him to be without her now.
**To Mend an Unbreakable Bond**

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey everybody who is checking this out! Here is more of the story! Again, I will be trying to post more as the day goes on! :)

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Irena

As Irena flew away from the Sanctum, tears blurred her vision. Even though the bond was begging her to turn around and go back to Stephen, she forced herself to keep flying. She was so beside herself with hurt and anger that she didn't even know what to do. She knew that she had issues, she realized that but she was trying. She wouldn't have done all that stuff with Stephen if she didn't trust him. She literally gave him a part of herself. She would never ever do that with someone that she didn't trust but it was still so damn hard for her to open up completely. Even when she told him about Charlie, she found that extremely hard to do but she knew that she needed to do it because she couldn't go on the way that she was. She understood that. But this was different; this was something that truly frightened her so it was ten times harder and when she was scared she tended to close herself off which made everything ten times worse.

She had honestly not meant to blurt out everything that she did but after he lashed out at her the way he did she couldn't help it. But she told the truth, she had so much magic locked away inside of her. She couldn't help but think if she tapped into the relic and tried to unleash all of the power that Mordo might somehow sense it. She couldn't help but think if Mordo got to her that he would screw with her mind and try to control the relic in that way and that would spell the end of the universe because the was no way in HELL that Mordo would be able to control the power inside of her or the relic for that matter. Her heart told her that it was okay to tell Stephen that all of this scared the shit out of her but she could never get her brain to cooperate with her heart. Her brain on the other hand just told her to keep everything locked inside and that clearly did a whole lot of good. She could feel Stephen's emotions through the bond and they made her sick. She could feel the regret but she still couldn't bring herself to go back, not yet anyway. She was still too upset at Stephen regardless of what the bond wanted her to do.

She huffed out a long sigh. Flying while she was this upset was not easy to do and she could feel her magic waning. She knew that she needed a place to go and fast. The only thing that she could think of to do was to go to Darcy's apartment in the tower. She only hoped that she could get there without being seen by anybody. She could only imagine what would happen if somebody like Tony found out what happened. What a freaking nightmare that would be, Tony would photon blast his head clean off and she could only imagine what her 'brothers' might try to do. She couldn't help the shudder that shot through her at the thought. She may not want to be around Stephen right now, but she sure as hell didn't want him murdered. The thought of losing him forever sent an emotional ripple through her. She shook out of those thoughts; she didn't want to think things like that right now.

Seeing the tower come into view, she let out a relieved sigh. She tried to land in front of the tower on her feet, but ended up falling ass over tea kettle on the ground. No matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't land properly to save her life. The same thing happened when she tried to exit a portal; she ended up on her ass every single time. Pulling herself up off of the ground, she entered the tower
praying to God almighty above that she could move fast enough to get to Darcy's apartment without alerting F.R.I.D.A.Y. She didn't even know how she managed it, but she managed to somehow get to Darcy's apartment unseen. Thank crap for small miracles. As typed in the key code to enter Darcy's apartment, her enhanced hearing from being transformed picked up some interesting sounds. Either she was having a grand old time by herself or was having a grand old time with somebody she wasn't sure which. Her enhanced sense of smell picked up her scent and the scent of the 'fun' she was having (which she hoped to never have to smell again), she loved Darcy like the sister that she never had but this was too much information. Suddenly, she picked up another scent that was decidedly very masculine. It smelled like spice (very different than Stephen's) and metal. It seemed very familiar to her and it took her no time figure out that the scent belonged to Bucky. Despite the fact that she was torn between drowning in her own despair from her fight with Stephen and being totally grossed by the mental image that was now trapped in her mind for who knows how long, she was happy for Bucky and Darcy they really did deserve to find happiness with each other.

'Go Bucky and Darcy!' She thought to herself.

Unfortunately, now she had a new problem to deal with. Did she want to risk entering Darcy's apartment and risk accidently interrupting Bucky and Darcy's fun or sit there enduring hearing it and smelling it for that matter? The way she saw it, her only other options at this point and time was to lie on the floor outside of Darcy's apartment where F.R.I.D.A.Y would more than likely catch her and that would unleash an unholy mess unlike the world had ever seen or spend at least one night on a park bench in Central Park. If she did that, with her luck she would end up being attacked by somebody and that would cause her to unleash her powers. This was something else that she DID. NOT. WANT. She let out a soft sigh, her best bet and the lesser of all the evils was to just sneak into Darcy's apartment.

'Why is it always me all the damn time?' She wondered to herself.

As quietly as she could, she entered Darcy's apartment. The smells and noise became ten times worse but she ignored them. Everything was going according to plan until she walked right into Darcy's coffee table on the way to the couch. She clamped her hand down onto her mouth in an effort to stop the painful yell that wanted to escape. Workout runners or not, that shit still hurt like all hell.

'Damn freaking balls and hell!' She thought in agony.

Unfortunately, the minimal noise she made was enough to alert Bucky with his super soldier hearing. She could hear a lot of movement and talking from Darcy's room. Apparently, Darcy thought she was an intruder. Ooopsie. Because of his enhanced senses Bucky seemed to know better. Both he and Darcy exited the bedroom and looked at her with shock standing there with a hand clamped over her mouth. Luckily, they were both properly dressed. Now that they knew that she was there, she unclamped her hand from her mouth a let out a painful yell and a few choice swear words. She watched them take her disheveled appearance and the dried tear tracks on her freckled face. They realized very quickly something was very wrong with her.

"Jesus doll face, what in the fuck happened to you?" Bucky asked worriedly.

She opened her mouth to try and explain and nothing but a choked sob came out. Immediately, Darcy jumped into action and led her to the couch. She tried to comfort her the best that she could and it worked. She calmed down enough to explain to them what happened.

"Stephen and I had a blow out about trust. I didn't know what else to do so I came here." She tried to explain.

She saw that Darcy looked pissed; Bucky on the other hand just sighed and ran his hand through his
messy head of hair. They both knew how trust worked with her. She saw that Darcy was going to
get up off the couch and could sense what she wanted to go and do. Rip Stephen a new one which
would not help anything right now. She grabbed the back of Darcy's shirt and forced her to sit back
down. Darcy looked at her questioningly.

"Sorry Darcy, I know you want to go rip Stephen a new one but I don't think that's a good plan."
She mumbled.

Making a noise of agreement, Bucky when a sat down next to her on the side that Darcy wasn't
occupying. He addressed Darcy who was full on pouting now.

"She's right sweetness, we want to fix the situation not make it irreparable." He advised wisely.

She watched Darcy roll her eyes. She still felt like a bag of shit but she couldn't help but snicker a
little bit.

"Alright, fiiiine." She whined.

"Come on girlie, you look like you could use some sleep. Go to the spare room and I'll find you
something more comfortable to sleep in." Darcy said, forcing her up from the couch.

She bid goodnight to Bucky and let Darcy drag her to the spare bedroom. She had no idea how she
was going to sleep but she knew having time alone to try and sort out all of her feelings would help a
little. Darcy forced her to set on the edge of the bed while she left the room presumably to go and
retrieve something for her to sleep in. A few minutes later, Darcy returned with a pair of sleepy pants
and a large, long sleeved shirt that clearly belonged to Bucky. Looking at them, she wanted to
question just how long Bucky had been coming over her apartment but let it drop for now. Darcy
knew her too well. While Darcy liked her pyjamas on the skimpier end of the spectrum, she liked
hers on the bigger end of the spectrum. Darcy knew that Bucky's pyjamas would be a lot more
comfortable and she needed all the comfort that she could get right now. She gave Darcy a grateful
look and hugged her.

"Thank you so much, D. I owe you like a thousand now." She said softly.

Darcy laughed softly and shook her head.

"Don't worry about it girlie, and no you don't. Just try and get some sleep. We will fix this in the
morning, I promise." Darcy promised.

She nodded and bid Darcy goodnight. After Darcy left the room, she started changing her clothes.
First she kicked off her running shoes and took her socks off placing them inside of her shoes. Then
she changed out of her work out clothes into Bucky's pyjamas. She wasted no time in crawling into
bed. For a while, she just sat there and contemplated what exactly she was going to do about this
whole situation. Slowly, she felt herself drift into an uneasy sleep.

**Stephen**

Stephen was beside himself, he had no idea what do. All he wanted to do was to do was go and find
Irena and convince her to come back to the Sanctum with him. He knew that it wouldn't be that easy
though. She was stubborn as she was shy and affectionate. It would take a lot of coaxing and
convincing to get her to come back. Something he would do in a heartbeat, hell, he would beg if he
had to. He ran his hand through his already messy hair. When he fought with Christine, it had never
been like this. Then again, he hadn't been bonded to Christine in the way he was with Irena. He let
out a long deep sigh. He was suddenly reminded of his last conversation with Christine. She had
asked him what Irena had that she didn't and he told her it was everything. He hadn't wanted to sound like a giant asshole to her but that was the only truthful response he could give. He didn't know what other word he could use describe it. She gave him things that Christine just couldn't. Perhaps, it was because they both used magic or because their magic had bonded, he did not know. What he did know was that if he didn't figure out a way to fix it, he would lose his everything and he couldn't stand the thought of that.

Not knowing what else to do, he got up from the couch in the foyer. He knew that sleep wasn't an option right now so he decided that meditation would have to do. Maybe he would come up with a way to fix this mess after he was finished. Leaving the foyer, he went to his study and his stormy blue eyes immediately focused on his half organized desk and his heart clenched painfully. An image of Irena organizing all of the papers and books popped into his mind. He could see her there, her hips swaying softly to the music she listened to as she did so. Her pink lips mouthing the words to the song and her messy, curly hair bouncing to the movements she made. He had to force the image from his mind before he lost it and flipped the desk over completely. He made his way to the center of the room and sat down cross-legged. At the moment his cloak refused to obey him, not that he blamed it. He was the reason its mistress had taken off without even so much as a look back. Little Sapphire also wanted nothing to do with him at the moment and he couldn't blame her either. He let out another sigh and prepared to meditate.

He banished all thought from his mind and forced his mind to relax. It took a bit, but he felt himself slipping into meditation. Suddenly, he felt a familiar shift and his eyes popped open and he found himself surrounded by perpetual blue sky and green grass again.

'Ooh not this, I can't deal with it right now.' He thought with despair.

He watched as the Ancient One came into view looking serene as ever. He frowned. What was he even doing here this time? He had more important things to deal with at the moment.

"Well hello Master Strange, I must say this IS a surprise." She greeted.

Hearing this caused his frown to deepen. He chose to forgo telling her to call him by his proper title because it would be fruitless and a waste of breath.

"What do you mean a surprise? You didn't call me here?" He asked her.

The Ancient One shook her head and she regarded him with a knowing look.

"On the contrary, Master Strange. YOU called me here this time. Your magic sensed you needed help and thusly it called me here." She explained.

He looked at her like she grew six heads. She shook her head in exasperation.

"Master Strange, have you learned anything from the Mystic Arts? Now tell me what the matter is." She urged him.

He sighed. He didn't even know where to begin. He decided just to tell her everything. He told her all about the fight about her trusting him that she left the Sanctum and he didn't know where she was now. He couldn't help the fear that course through him at the thought of her never coming back to him. He knew that she could sense his fear now.

"What if she never comes back to me?" He asked softly.

The Ancient One looked at him with softened eyes.
"All will be well Master Strange but you have to go to her, she won't come back to you. What Irena defines as trust may be different than your definition of trust; you must accept that and let it go. She needs you and she LOVES you." She advised softly.

He tried to ask her something but she shushed him. She gave him a motherly pat on the shoulder.

"Go to her." She repeated.

He watched a familiar look from on her features and knew it was time for him to leave this place.

'Oh goody.' He thought with mock enthusiasm.

Giving him one last serene smile, she placed both hands on his upper chest and gave him a good hard shove. He felt the falling sensation and suddenly he found himself face first on his study floor. He righted himself slowly. He knew what he had to do, but he could he find the courage to apologize to her first? He really hoped so.

Three Days Later

Bucky

It had been three days since Irena had the blowout with Stephen. He knew that he had to do SOMETHING. Irena had become so despondent all she wanted to do was sit in the corner of the couch in a small ball and stare at nothing. The only time she moved was to go to the bathroom when she needed to. On the second day, He and Darcy forced her into the shower and forced her to eat. She couldn't go on like this much longer. Something needed to change and fast. He knew the type of person that Strange was. His busted pride was probably preventing him from getting the gonads to come over here and apologize to her. He sighed he knew that he would have to go find him.

'This is so going to be fun.' He thought with sarcasm.

Suddenly, his thoughts were interrupted by Darcy coming out of the bedroom looking like she was going on a mission. His dark blue eyes softened at his 'best girl'. He understood why she wanted to go and find Strange to go give him a piece of her mind but castrating him wouldn't solve anything.

"Sweetness, where do you think you are going?" He asked curiously.

Darcy gave him an angry look.

"I'm going to give Doctor fucking Strange a piece of my damn mind that's where!" She hissed angrily.

He couldn't help the chuckle that escaped the back of his throat.

"I know that you want to help Irena but we need to bring Strange back here in tact so I think I should go and find him." He said, holding back a laugh.

She gave him the stink eye but relented and went to sit back down with Irena.

"That's my 'best girl'." He praised, kissing her softly.

Parting from Darcy, he turned his attention to poor little sister who wouldn't stop staring at the wall. Gently he stroked the top of her head. She barely acknowledged the touch and he let out a long sigh. He had to go fix this sooner rather than later. He wasted no time in leaving Darcy's apartment and then he left the tower all together. He was on a mission now and he would see it through until the
end. The first place he decided to check was the Sanctum. He was shocked to see that Stephen was not there. Even Stephen's buddy Wong, had no idea where he was. He exited the Sanctum and thought hard for a moment. If he were a guy who just had a huge blow out with his girlfriend where would he go? The light bulb suddenly went off inside of his head; he would go and get shitfaced. He immediately thought of the pub a few blocks away from here.

'Oh this is going to be so much fun; I sure hope Stephen is a happy drunk.' He thought with exasperation.

Making his way to the small pub, he entered the building and sure enough Stephen was sitting at the bar. His eyebrows disappeared into his hairline, he could tell that Stephen was not sober but he was the most immaculate looking drunk he had ever seen. For some reason, that didn't surprise him at all. From what he's seen of Stephen so far, he was immaculate in everything he did, so drinking was no exception. Without hesitation, he plopped down onto the stool next to Stephen and motioned to the bartender to give him a beer. Just because he couldn't get drunk anymore didn't mean that he still didn't enjoy the taste once and awhile.

He wasted no time at all in breaking the silence.

"So, I think you and I need to talk. If you don't wanna talk back that's fine but I'm going to tell you a story about trust and you are gonna listen to me." He started.

He saw that Stephen acknowledged him then turned back to his drink, it was a start.

"When I first got to the tower, everybody thought I was a monster and nobody would come anywhere near me. Except Irena that is, she never hesitated once in making sure I was looked after. She brought me food and brought me clean clothes when I needed them. Hell, she even brushed my damn hair for fuck's sakes. Never once was she afraid to enter my cell when other seasoned agents refused to go anywhere NEAR it. One day when she was coming to visit me, she got cornered by two agents and I'm not gonna lie, I lost my fucking shit. I broke out of my cell and went full assassin on them. I had tunnel vision all I wanted was them dead. But Irena, she wanted them to live despite what they tried to do. She approached me in full assassin mode, all 4 feet 11 inches of her and coaxed me into letting them live. Now there is some trust, she trusted me not to kill her knowing full well I could in a split second and you know what else? I know she trusts you just as much if not more because she trusts you with her most important possession, her heart. Please don't make her regret that. She loves you more than anything." He finished.

"So, are you to going to leave this pity party for one? Irena is literally starting waste away without you because of the bond you two share and I know that is the last thing you want. Plus I know you need her too." He coaxed.

Sure enough, Stephen turned in his direction and nodded.

"Your right Bucky, I'm sorry I'm such a stupid coward." Stephen muttered.

Looking at Stephen, his eyes softened a little bit. He knew that this was as hard on him as it was Irena.

"Hey you're a human being and shit happens. Let's just get out of here and get you back with Irena alright?" He said, giving him a friendly pat on the shoulder.

After tossing a few bills onto the bar to pay for all the drinks, he and Stephen left the pub. He turned and looked at Stephen curiously.
"So, do you think you are sober enough to open one of those portal do-dads of yours or do you wanna just walk back and sober up some more?" He asked curiously.

He watched Stephen think for a moment.

"I think walking is the best course of action." He admitted.

Looking at Stephen, he made a noise of agreement. While he kept the outward appearance of being mostly sober, drunken magic was probably not a good idea.

"Sure thing." He replied.

Stephen

Stephen walked back to the tower with Bucky in silence. He had no idea what he would have done if Bucky had not found him, probably wasted away in that pub like the complete bloody coward he was being. After his talk with the Ancient One, he was unable to bring himself to go to her for fear of being completely rejected by her. He knew that it was stupid to think that but he couldn't help it. He also couldn't stand feeling her desolate emotions anymore. So instead of doing what the Ancient One told him to do, he went to the pub to try and drink them out of his mind. Something he did a lot of when he was trying so hard to fix his hands. Thankfully, when Bucky found him, he hadn't gotten very far in the endeavor. The closer they got to the tower, the stronger her emotions became. He wanted nothing more than to fix this mess now. They entered the tower and went to Darcy's apartment.

Before Bucky punched in the key code, he turned to him and gave him a look as if to say 'are you ready for this?'

He nodded and Bucky punched in the key code.

They both entered the apartment and his stormy blues eyes immediately zeroed in on Irena's small form huddled in the corner of the couch and he sucked in a breath. He could feel all of her emotions. They were so strong. He saw that she was wearing what he assumed to be Bucky's clothes and for a moment the possessiveness was once again overwhelming but he put it away for now, he had more important things on his mind. The urge to approach her was also overwhelming and he wasted no time in doing so. It took her no time at all to sense him there and she looked at him like she was somewhere between being completely shocked and not knowing what to do. He quickly made the decision for her. Kneeling in front of her, he gently forced her to come to him until he was almost cradling her like a small child.

"Irena, I cannot apologize enough for how I acted, please forgive me. You are my tiny little love and I NEED you." He murmured softly into her hair.

He felt her positively vibrating against him. She buried her face into his neck and she wrapped her arms around him tightly.

"Don't worry Stephen, I forgive you. Love you too." She murmured back into his neck.

The relief that he felt was almost palpable and he could sense that Irena felt it too.

He never heard sweeter words spoken in all his life.
A/N: Hello everybody here's more of the story! I again plan to put up as many more chapters I can today! I have a lot more ready to go! Thanks for all the kudos I've been getting it means so much! I hope you all like this chapter too! :)

Stephen

Absentmindedly, Stephen stroked Irena's hip while she slept. He and Irena hadn't parted from each other for the better part of two days and he had to admit that he was enjoying every minute. As he continued to stroke her hip, he thought of everything that had transpired in the last week or so. He hoped to never fight like that with her again it was nothing but three days of hell for the both of them. Letting out a soft sigh, he thought about how much he truly owed Bucky. He was certain that if Bucky hadn't come looking for him when he did, he would probably be still at the pub trying to drink away his misery. After Bucky convinced him to leave the pub, he looked at him with a new appreciation. Honestly, he could say he gained a good friend and was glad that Irena had somebody like him looking out for her for all those years. He ran his hand through his messy hair, some Sorcerer Supreme he was turning out to be, he didn't even want to know what would happen if the Ancient One called him back to that place and found out that he ended up chickening out instead of going to see Irena right away like she told him to do.

Suddenly, he felt himself jolted out of his thoughts by Irena shifting in her sleep. She shifted towards him and he saw a frown forming on her freckled face. He could sense that she was dreaming intensely and must be experiencing a suppressed memory of some kind. He shifted her closer to himself and tried to soothe her the best that he could. He knew that if he woke her suddenly from the dream, it would make everything a lot worse. She let out a small whimper and reached out for him. Gently, he shifted her even closer to himself and she wrapped herself around him. Her small hand clenched onto the front of his shirt. He stroked her messy hair back and cooed to her. He only hoped the dream would end soon.

Irena

Dream/Memory

As 6 year old Irena practiced her spells with the other students, she felt eyes on her. She could see that Mr. Mordo was staring at her. He continued to stare her until her lesson was over. After the teacher dismissed all of the students, he beckoned her to come to him. She hesitated sensing that something still wasn't right with him. Despite her instincts telling her not to do it, she approached Mr. Mordo.

He smiled at her and she tried to smile back. She didn't want him catching on that she could sense something wasn't quite right.

"Come with me, little dragon girl. I have something I wish to teach you." He said, beckoning her once again to follow him.

She looked at him strangely. Why was he calling her dragon girl? Unfortunately, her 6 year old girl
curiosity was overriding the rest of her instincts and she decided to follow him. He led her down to
the library. They reached the forbidden books chained to the wall. She looked at him in shock as he
unchained one of them and placed it on the table in front of them. He gestured for her to come and
sit next to him. She hesitated for a moment. 'Mother' had always told her never to touch these books.
Mr. Mordo seemed to sense her worry.

"Don't worry little dragon girl, I only wish to show you something. She won't know." He reassured.

Why did that make her even more worried? Of course her 'mother' would know. She knew
everything. She forced herself to approach him anyway for fear of what he might do if she didn't.

"Good girl, look at this." He praised.

He opened the book and flipped through the pages until he landed on one with what looked like a
bunch of ancient people on side of the page and on the other a drawing of a necklace with what
looked a dragon on it. Looking at it made her feel...different. Suddenly, she felt a hand on her back
and it caused her to jump out of her thoughts. Mr. Mordo was looking at her again with that look
that she really didn't like.

"How would you like to learn some of the spells that these ancient guardians once knew?" He asked
seriously.

She looked at him like he grew ten heads and started spitting fire. Was he crazy? There was no way
she could learn any of those spells! Before she could voice any of those things, her 'Mother' entered
the library and she could sense the anger radiating off of her.

"Karl Mordo! What is the meaning of this?" She asked angrily.

She could sense that Mr. Mordo didn't even care that he went against her 'Mother's' rules at all.

"I was merely showing her who she is meant to be. Why is that so bad?" Mordo asked defiantly.

She watched her 'Mother' ready to strike at Mr. Mordo. She could sense there was more to what was
going on than what she knew. Something was changing in Mr. Mordo and for some reason she felt
that her being here and her powers were responsible for it.

End Dream/Memory

Irena

Irena jolted awake with a gasp. She sat up ram-rod straight and tried to catch her breath. She felt a
pair of strong arms wrap around her and she was pulled against a warm chest. She clung to Stephen
as she tried to calm herself down. She felt Stephen rub small circles in the middle of her back. He
murmured non-sense into her ear and she finally felt herself start to calm down some. She felt herself
calm down even more and she sank further into him. She buried her face into his chest and let out a
small sigh. She found his deep voice to be incredibly calming and soothing. Looking down at her
tenderly, he let his hand wander underneath his black shirt that she currently wore. She felt his thumb
run over her scars on her lower back and a good kind of shiver ran through her. Despite the skin
being really sensitive to the touch, he knew that she really enjoyed it when he touched her there and
that it would make her relax even more. He always knew exactly what touch she needed exactly
when she needed it. They continued to snuggle in a companionable silence until Stephen spoke.

"Sweetheart, what did you dream about?" He asked softly.

For a moment, she hesitated. Her instincts were still screaming at her not to tell him anything
especially about the book part. But she knew that she had to tell him everything because she couldn't deal with this on her own, nobody would be able to do it. Somehow, she had a strong feeling that the book in her dream would become very important at some point soon and he needed to know about it. Taking a deep breath, she told him everything. She told him about Mordo's increasingly weird behaviour and about the book. He looked like he was torn between looking totally shocked and completely intrigued with the whole thing. She could sense that he really wanted to know about that book. She would never admit it out loud, but she sort of did too. It might have more information about her and her powers in it.

As she thought of that, another thought popped into her head. Was all of this her fault? Did she turn Mordo evil? Did she make him lose his heart to darkness? Thinking all of this made her emotions turn into a cacophony of hell again. She knew that Stephen could sense it. Gently, he forced her to look into those beautiful eyes of his.

"You are thinking of something bad again." He stated knowingly.

She winced. She knew that was coming. She thought for a moment on what exactly to tell him and just decided that the best way to do it would be like pulling off a Band-Aid. She chewed at her lips for a second and then she spoke.

"Um Stephen, is this whole entire thing my fault? Did I make Mordo lose his heart to darkness because of my powers?" She asked softly.

Stephen regarded her with a soft look at her question. It was full of warmth and caring. He snuggled her even closer to himself.

"Oh my sweet little love, none of this is your fault. Mordo chose to lose his heart darkness. It was nothing you did and there was nothing you could have done to change it. It was his choice to let the darkness grow inside of him." He murmured into her ear, placing a warm kiss on her temple.

"Okay, Stephen." She mumbled back, letting her eyes drift closed.

While she DID believe him, she wished there was something she could have done. From what little memories of Kamar-Taj that had returned to her, she knew that she once looked up to and adored him. She sighed. She knew that continuing to think about it would only upset her more so she tried to let it go for now. She tried to let herself relax again and soon she felt herself start to drift off to sleep. She was just about completely out when Stephen nudged her back awake. She looked up at him and gave him a mock angry glare.

"What in the hell was that for?" She whined in protest.

He chuckled and smoothed the frown lines from her glare on her forehead away with his thumb.

"You aren't going to like it very much but I need to get some work to done today, I'm sorry sweetheart." He explained.

He was right, she absolutely hated it. She didn't want to be separated from him yet or at all for that matter. She was very selfish when it came to him and she knew that he was when it came to her too. She knew that he did in fact have work to do but all she wanted to do was be completely stubborn about the whole damn thing.

"No." She stated stubbornly.

"No?" He repeated, laughing outright.
"What if I don't want to move?" She asked.

She turned in his embrace so she could straddle him. She watched his eyes darken a little and she could sense his desire. She took it one step further and let her small hands wander underneath his shirt. She stroked along his ribs, she knew that he was particularly sensitive in that area. She could sense his desire increase tenfold. He gave her a scorching look. He craned his head up so he could kiss her hard which she enjoyed immensely. As she continued her explorations, he growled lowly into the kiss. When oxygen became a necessity, they parted from each other panting.

"Naughty little minx, you are such a dirty little tease aren't you?" He purred.

"Not my fault you created a monster. Are you going to do something about it?" She countered playfully.

He looked at her hotly for a moment and then lowered his lips to her ear.

"No." He stated softly, licking the shell of her ear as he pulled back. Clearly, he wanted to see her reaction.

Her mismatched eyes bulged and she couldn't help the angry exclamation that slipped from her mouth.

"What the HELL? What do you mean no?" She exclaimed in outrage.

This caused him to burst out laughing and for a moment she seriously thought about trying to smother him with a pillow.

"Oh sweet little kitten, don't you know? Sometimes a little teasing makes everything so much better in the end. Trust me; you'll be thanking me later." He laughed.

She rolled her mismatched eyes and pouted at him.

"Oh you suck so much." She mock deadpanned.

She wasn't really pissed at him just pissed that he beat her at own game so spectacularly. At her statement, he laughed harder.

"Oh come on don't be so upset with me, my little love. It will be worth it you'll see. In the meantime, why don't you go to my study and continue our cleaning efforts. I know it's boring but there might be some books that will help you learn to use your magic to heal. After I'm done everything I need to do, I will come up and join you how does that sound?" He suggested.

She thought about it and decided that it was a good idea. While she really didn't feel like cleaning, there could be some really useful information in that mess.

"Okay fine, you win." She relented.

She watched Stephen give her a tender smile.

"Good girl, now go get ready." He praised, kissing her softly.

After parting from her, he gently nudged her from the bed. It took her a bit but she finally relented and got up from the bed. Slowly, she made her way toward the bathroom. She could feel his eyes on her the whole time she walked to the bathroom. She inwardly rolled her eyes and shook her head in exasperation. Entering the bathroom, she cleaned her teeth and brushed out her crazy head of hair.
Looking toward the shower, she momentarily entertained the idea of hoping in quickly then decided against it. She wanted to use that lovely bath later instead. She exited the bathroom. She smiled when she saw that Stephen was now up and about too. She went to go and pick out some clothes. She decided that she wanted to get dressed properly in case she wanted to take a break from cleaning Stephen's study and go make a coffee run. She picked out her AC/DC shirt and her favorite jeans. As she got ready to change, she paused momentarily when she saw that Stephen had yet to enter the bathroom and instead was staring at her intently. She looked at him with her eyebrow quirked.

"Did you want to watch me change?" She joked.

She could sense that he was seriously entertaining the idea and gave her a look that melted her insides a little.

"Don't tempt me, my little minx."

She couldn't help the reaction her body had to his voice. Clearly sensing what he was doing to her, he gave her a shit-eating grin and then disappeared into the bathroom.

'Ooh Stephen, you asshole you.' She thought knowing full well that he would read her thoughts.

Shaking her head, she changed quickly and pulled on a pair of socks. One was blue and the other pink because she just couldn't be bothered to find a matching pair. She slipped on her Doc Martins, grabbed her phone and slipped in her pocket. She also decided to grab her IPod in case she wanted music too. As soon as she opened bedroom door, both the cloak and Sapphire literally attacked her. She couldn't help the peal of laughter that is escaped her. They had been this way ever since she returned. She could sense that they were scared she was going to leave again. They didn't have to worry about her doing that any time soon. The cloak 'hugged her' and Sapphire crawled up onto her shoulder. She told the cloak to wait for Stephen and it obeyed her like an obedient puppy. She left with Sapphire riding on her shoulder. She wanted to leave the room before Stephen exited the bathroom or she would never leave at all.

She entered Stephen's study and looked around. It almost looked like the mess went back to the way it was before she started cleaning. She made an annoyed noise. Before she got to work, she sent Darcy a quick text to let her know she was fine because she hadn't spoken to her since she and Stephen left her apartment. Honestly, she owed both Bucky and Darcy hugely for how much they helped her through all of that stuff. She honestly couldn't ask for a better brother and sister. Sighing, she put all of that out of her mind because she knew that it would mess with her emotions to think about it too much. Pulling her IPod out of her pocket, she picked a song, placed the earbuds in her ears and got to work. This time she let Sapphire stay on her shoulder as she cleaned. She cleaned Stephen's whole entire desk without finding a damn thing. Trying to ignore her annoyance at that, she moved on to his shelves and hopped to get lucky there. Sure enough, she found a strange old book that somebody had jammed in-between two huge books clearly hoping that nobody would ever find it. It was the oldest book she had ever seen in all her life. Handling it with care, she brought it over to Stephen's desk and sat down. It turned out to be a book on ancient spells.

As she began to read through it, it told her that healing was an ancient art that very few sorcerers could do anymore. It was incredibly difficult and hard to learn. Well, if that wasn't just hunky dory she didn't know what was. She began to wonder if she could even learn to do it. She continued to read through the entry and almost choked. In order to be able to have any hope of doing it, she would have to learn to clear her mind and cleanse her emotions. From what she was reading, healing just simply didn't happen if the sorcerer was full of negative emotions. Well, this was going to be a real treat to learn considering her emotions were a complete mess like ninety percent of the time. She would definitely need to ask Stephen to teach her to meditate if she had any hope in hell in doing it.
She read that in order to do it, the sorcerer needed to channel every good emotion that they could like they were trying to perform a spell. If it worked, they could channel the pure light energy that came from it into the person's injury that they were trying to heal. She wondered how taxing that could be, for her it would probably be the definition of impossible.

As she pondered that, she felt something shift in either Wong's or Stephen's magic. She couldn't discern whose magic it was from where she was only that somebody was hurt. She decided that it would probably be a wise idea to check out the situation. Leaving Stephen's study, she made her way down to the library. As she did so, she could hear yelling. For some reason, Wong and Stephen were fighting...again. Entering the library, she looked at the scene in front of her with shock. Wong was hobbling around with an injured foot glaring absolute daggers at Stephen and Stephen was standing there looking completely unbothered by it of course. She quickly deciphered what happened. She looked at Stephen questioningly.

"Stephen may ask why you found it necessary to drop a 50 pound book on Wong's foot?" She asked curiously.

Before Stephen could answer, Wong did.

"Dingus over here dropped the book on my foot so you could have something to practice your healing on." Wong explained, wincing in pain.

For a whole solid minute, she wanted to laugh out loud so badly at Wong saying the word 'dingus' because that was the closest he had ever came to swearing so far and it was hilarious.

After she got over that, she turned to Stephen and tried to give him a stern look.

"Stephen, what the hell?" She exclaimed.

Stephen shrugged back at her.

"I was curious and wanted to see if you could heal it. Besides, he has tones of magical medicinal herbs to heal it with if you can't do it." He said like it was no big deal.

She couldn't help but facepalm at him.

"But that's not how it works!" She said in exasperation.

Before Stephen could respond, Wong hobbled up to her and placed a calming hand on her shoulder. For a moment she felt Stephen's possessiveness spike but she ignored it because she was mad at him.

"Unfortunately dingus over here is right. I can heal it if you can't so it's okay. So come and see if you can heal it." Wong said reassuringly.

She sighed but relented. She helped Wong hobble over to the table and sit down. She bent down so she could examine his foot. It was all bruised and swollen. She frowned, it was a damn mess. She wondered what the hell kind of book Stephen dropped onto it and from what height. She didn't know how to go about doing this but she decided that trying to cleanse all of her negative emotions would be a start. She started trying to think of only good things and tried to concentrate the feelings but nothing was happening and she was getting frustrated. She knew that it wasn't going to work. Wong gave her a reassuring look.

"It's okay little sister, I can heal it." He reassured.

She nodded but she was still upset. It was the first time she tried to do something and couldn't get it
to work eventually. Usually everything she did, she could eventually get it to work. She knew that it was going to be hard and not instant but it still bugged the shit out of her immensely. She knew that Stephen could sense that. He gave her a reassuring look. He wasted no time in coming up to her and stroking back her hair tenderly knowing that she really enjoyed that.

"It's okay sweetheart, we'll figure it out." He said softly.

She nodded. She knew that telling him what she learned from the book would help the situation too but she didn't feel like doing any of that now. Stephen's beautiful bathtub was calling her name.

Stephen seemed to sense that she wanted to go and relax some.

"I'm sure you've done enough cleaning to last a year now. Why don't you go and relax and I will help Wong with his foot and join you in a bit." He suggested.

She decided that she really liked Stephen's suggestion. Smiling at him, she stood on her tippy toes and gave him a soft kiss.

"You are so good to me." She murmured.

She could sense that Stephen was inwardly preening at her complement.

'Egoistical much?' She thought to herself.

She also heard gagging noises coming from Wong in the background. Clearly, he was trying to show her that he was just fine.

Rolling her mismatched eyes, she gave her boys an exasperated look. Honestly, she didn't know what she would do without either Stephen or Wong. Gently, she shooed Stephen toward Wong so he could help fix his foot and left the library. She wasted no time in getting back to Stephen's room. She gave a command to Sapphire to go into Stephen's bed and entered the bathroom. She picked out some of the bath products the Natasha and Wanda gave her and started running a bath. After the bathtub filled some, she stripped and got in. Immediately, she began to feel more relaxed. So much so that she began to feel herself drift off a little. Suddenly, she began to feel weird. She knew that a suppressed memory was coming on. Two in one day, holy crap balls almighty. She could do nothing but let it pass.

Memory

4 year old Irena frowned at her chop sticks. She hated chop sticks. She looked at her bowl of rice begging to be eaten but she just couldn't do it. She was so grumpy and hungry. She watched as 'Mr. Mordo' came up to her probably to see what the matter was.

"Hello little one, what seems to be the matter?" He asked curiously.

"I can't do chop sticks." She pouted.

'Mr. Mordo' let out a hearty laugh and it made her pout more.

"Not funny, 'Mr. Mordo'." She mumbled.

"Alright little one, I'm sorry. I can teach you how to use them if you wish." He suggested.

Her mismatched eyes lit up.

"Oh yes please!" She said excitedly.
He chuckled and sat down at the table with her. Immediately, she climbed onto his lap and brought her bowl closer to her. For a moment she felt 'Mr. Mordo' stiffen, then he relaxed and began to teach her how to use the chopsticks. She supposed that she should have asked 'Mr. Mordo' before she climbed all over him. He didn’t seem to mind now though. 'Mr. Mordo' was the first male ever to treat her nicely and she loved it.

End Memory

Irena gasped as she came out of the memory. For some reason, that memory brought on such terrible sadness and it was possibly because 'Mr. Mordo’ was the first father figure she ever had and now he lost heart to darkness and was considered the enemy. She felt tears spring to her mismatched eyes and tried to hold them back to no avail. She could sense that Stephen was coming to her. Her terrible sadness had probably alerted him that something was the matter with her. Sure enough, Stephen entered the bathroom with a worried look on his face. He saw that she was upset and wasted no time in stripping down. She was so upset that she couldn't even appreciate the view. He quickly got into the bathtub and embraced her which caused more tears to come. He rubbed his hands down her arms and made languid strokes down her back. She calmed down some and nuzzled into his chest. This was exactly what she needed, skin on skin. Sensing that she calmed some, Stephen asked her what the matter was.

"What happened, sweetheart?" He asked softly.

She told him about the memory. He sighed and his arms tightened around her.

"I'm so sorry, my little love." He murmured, kissing her lovingly on the temple.

"I know." She murmured back softly.

Suddenly, the both noticed that the glow of the relic around her neck increased slightly. Looking it curiously, Stephen touched it softly as if examining it. She did too.

What was happening to it?
To Return to Kamar-Taj

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey sorry for the lack of updates today! I was working on the newest chapter of this story! To make it up to you all I am putting up one up now before I hit the hay! Thanks again for all the Kudos they mean more than you know to me! :)

Stephen

Pacing around his bedroom, Stephen was trying and failing to figure out a way to approach Wong about going to take a look at the chained up book in Irena's memory with him trying to blow his face off for asking such a thing. Remembering the last time somebody messed with one of those chained up books, he shuddered. He really didn't want to accidently wake up another demon bent on destroying everything again. No thanks. Dying over and over in an infinite time loop from hell once was enough for him. He turned to Irena's sleeping form and looked at her tenderly. He knew that she wanted to know what the relic was doing as much as he did. The book's information could help them understand her and how her powers worked a whole lot better.

As he thought all of those things, another thought popped into his mind. Should Irena come with him and Wong to Kamar-Taj to check out the book? He knew that she would want to but he was worried her being there would trigger all kinds of repressed memories. Trying to relive too many repressed memories at once would be bad for both her mental and physical heath not to mention all of the other stuff that she was trying to deal with. He sighed. He would have to wake her up so they could have a conversation about it. This was something he really didn't want to do because she hadn't been sleeping very well as of late and now that she finally was he didn't want to ruin it by waking her up. Quietly, he approached the bed and sat down into it making sure that he didn't disturb her yet. He just sat there and watched her for a moment.

She was all tangled up in the sheets. It gave him quite the view of her curvy thighs and legs which he enjoyed thoroughly. Her dark curls were as wild as ever and blocking half her freckled face from his view as usual. She had one of her small hands hiding underneath her mass of curls and the other was continuously trying to pull the covers up over her head to no avail because they were so tangled. His blue eyes softened as he continued to watch her. He still wondered how he got so lucky. She was so beyond perfect to him. She loved him for him scars and all and her magic was absolutely amazing. He remembered a time when he didn't even want to go and help her in the first place. Had Wong not forced him to go and meet with Tony, he would have never met her at all. That thought caused a painful emotional jolt to ripple through him. He couldn't quell it fast enough and he could sense that she felt it through the bond. He could sense that she had started to wake up.

"Stephen, watsa madder?" She asked groggily.

He looked at her affectionately and chuckled.

"Nothing sweetheart, I was just thinking that's all." He explained.

"Uh oh, that's never a good thing." She joked.

He let out an indignant snort and rolled his eyes at her joke.
"Oh har, har." He said indignantly.

She let out a small giggle at his response. He watched her detangle herself from the sheets with some effort and shift so that her head was nestled in his lap. She looked up at him curiously.

"What were you thinking about?" She asked curiously.

He paused for a moment. He decided to omit the part about his emotions going haywire and just tell her his thoughts on visiting Kamar-Taj to take a look at that chained up book. He knew that she understood what had happened with his emotions anyway because of the bond and bringing it up would probably only upset her which he was trying to avoid. She had already been upset enough in the last few days to last a lifetime.

"I was thinking about going to Kamar-Taj to take a look at that chained up book in your memory, would you be up to coming with Wong and me to do so?" He asked curiously.

He watched her think for a moment and then she nodded. He could sense that she was a little apprehensive about going but it was being overridden by her curiosity. She wanted to know what was in that book as much as he did.

"Sure, I really want to know what is in that book. Besides, if shit goes sideways you and Wong will be there to help me." She agreed.

He looked at her warmly and nodded.

"Of course we will. Why don't you get yourself cleaned up while I go and talk to Wong and then meet us down in the library when you are ready?" He suggested.

He could sense that she liked that idea but wasn't ready to move just yet.

"That sounds good to me, but I think I'll stay here for a bit longer." She said cheekily.

He gave her an exasperated look but complied with her. If she was going to be cheeky with him, he was going to be cheeky right back at her. Two could play that game and he would beat her at it. Gently, he let his hand caress her shoulder and then slowly made his way down. He stopped briefly at her chest and explored for bit. He could sense through the bond that his touch was beginning to exciting her in a way that he really enjoyed. He let his hand move from her chest down to her stomach and wasted no time in letting his hand drift underneath the hem of his shirt. How he loved it when she paraded around in his shirts, they looked so much better on her than they would ever look on him. He stroked and teased every bit of skin that he could get his hands on. As he sensed her desire growing, he continued to stroke and caress downward until he reached the elastic band of her underwear. He could sense through the bond that she desperately wanted him to dip his fingers inside and tease her in another specific area. He did everything but that however and he began sense that she was becoming very frustrated with him. He couldn't help but find it extremely amusing.

"Stephen." She moaned in frustration.

He merely chuckled in response and continued to tease her. Finally her frustration reached its breaking point.

"Stephen, quit being such a cockblock!" She mewed lowly.

His blue eyes widened slightly at her bluntness. Not that he minded it of course; she continued to shock him every day with how far she had come from the sweet, shy girl she once was. She was still his sweet and shy little kitten at times but now she was also his dirty, naughty little minx and he
loved it. He loved the fact he and he alone was responsible for bringing that out in her. He also really enjoyed the idea that HE was the only one to ever really get to enjoy her in this way. She was HIS and he loved all of her but he knew that he had to teach her a lesson for being so cheeky to him. He stopped teasing her all together and he could feel her frustration morph into complete annoyance through the bond.

"Stephen, why did you stop?" She whined in protest.

"Maybe next time you won’t be so cheeky with me my little minx, hmm?" He purred.

She let out an annoyed noise. He watched her grope for a pillow. Suddenly, she shifted so that she was straddling him. She lifted the pillow over her head ready to give him a good swat with it however before she could; he pounced and started tickling her mercilessly. He knew exactly where to tickle too no thanks to that memory that popped into her head when they sparred for the first time.

"Arrgh!" She yelled in protest, trying to swat his hands away to no avail.

She put up with the merciless attack for a bit longer before he could feel her surrendering through the bond.

"Okay, okay, alright! You win, I give up!" She squealed.

He stopped tickling her and gently started soothe her down from the attack. She mock glared at him.

"You are such a jackass." She muttered.

He laughed out right her assessment; he couldn't disagree with her there. He could sense that she knew it was all in good fun though.

"I know but you love me, now go and get ready while I go discuss with Wong what our plan of action with this endeavor is." He said, trying to nudge her from the bed.

It took a bit, but he finally got her moving. As she left the bed to head to the bathroom, he couldn't resist giving her perfect curvy ass a little love tap before she started moving. Whirling around, she gave him a mock glare and proceeded to flip him off. She sauntered away, hips swaying and he couldn't help but watch her. She really was one of a kind. After she entered the bathroom, he got up from the bed and straightened out his clothes. He hated it when his clothes were out of place and wrinkly. He had already gotten ready when she was still sleeping so he could go and talk to Wong while she got ready. Getting ready to exit the bedroom, he opened the door both Sapphire and the cloak entered the room clearly looking for Irena. Was he like chopped liver now? He shook his head. He watched Sapphire bound over the bathroom door and saw that the cloak was about to join her but he tried to call it magically to himself before it could. At first it just did not want to cooperate and he began to get frustrated. His own relic liked her better than him go figure that. He let out a long sigh through his nose. He called the cloak again to himself and it finally obeyed him though he could sense that it was 'pouting' at him.

After the cloak finally settled onto his shoulders, he left the bedroom and headed down to the library. Entering the library, he saw that Wong was sitting at the table looking over a book and he went to sit in the unoccupied seat across from him. Looking up, Wong shot him a look that clearly said that he could sense that he was up to something.

"Why do I think you are going ask me something that I am not going to like?" Wong asked knowingly.

He made a so-so sort of gesture and Wong looked heavenward in exasperation.
"Okay, what do you want?" Wong sighed.

He knew that sugar coating the situation would do him no good so he just cut to the chase.

"I want to go to Kamar-Taj to look at the chained up book in Irena's memory." He explained.

He could sense Wong was not thrilled with the idea but not because he thought the book was evil or anything of that nature. More so because he feared what it would do Irena. They were both worried that when she stepped foot back into Kamar-Taj that would trigger all kinds of repressed memories. But they also knew that if they tried to go without her that she would get angry and find some way to get there on her own which would make everything so much worse. This whole thing was about her and who she ways anyway; she deserved to be there to see what was in that book. She began to feel adverse effects from being there then they would just have to leave. He could sense that Wong was thinking the exact same thing he was.

After thinking a bit more, Wong nodded.

"Alright we'll go but the minute Irena is uncomfortable in any way, we leave. Is that clear?" Wong stated.

He was a little shocked at seeing Wong so serious but he understood. Irena had become his family in every way but blood and he was very protective of her just like he was.

He nodded in understanding.

"Of course we will." He agreed.

Suddenly, he could sense that Irena was on her way to the library. It was time to get this done.

Irena

As Irena headed to the library, she couldn't help the apprehension that she was feeling. She was so scared that she was going to start having fits of repressed memories when she got there. She knew that if she didn't quell her emotions quickly, that Stephen would feel them and become worried. Before she entered the library, she took a long, deep breath. She took a minute to readjust her 'Our Lady Peace' shirt. She also checked that her jeans and 'Doc Martins' looked okay. Satisfied that she looked fine and that she was now calm, she entered the library and came across Stephen and Wong having a deep conversation. When they sensed that she was there, they both looked up at her and smiled. Stephen got up and approached her. He looked at her softly and caressed her arms.

"There you are, are you ready to do this?" He asked her softly.

She returned his look and nodded.

"Yeah, I'm ready. Let's go!" She replied.

Her curiosity was getting the better of apprehension now.

He nodded back and gestured for Wong to open a portal. She was shocked that he just didn't do it himself but she supposed that Wong went there the most and would probably be the best person to do it. Wong wasted no time in opening a portal and they all stepped into it. For once, she didn't fall ass over tea kettle on the other side. As soon as she stepped out of the portal and into the library of Kamar-Taj, she could feel the magic humming. It was so much stronger and different than the magic in the Sanctum. She could feel a sense of a familiarity being there too. It took no time at all for her eyes to zero in on the book that they were looking for. It was the only one that had a soft blue glow
around it. She could sense that it was some kind of special magic but didn't know what it was. Carefully, she approached the chained up book and reached out to touch it. As soon as she did, a series of images assaulted her mind and they were moving so fast that she couldn't even decipher what exactly they were. Quickly, she yanked away her hand like it had been burned and tried to shake her head clear.

'Sweet holy crap, what in the hell was that?!' She wondered to herself.

She could sense that both Stephen and Wong were worried about her. Stephen wasted no time in approaching her checking to make sure that was okay.

"Sweetheart, what WAS that? Are you alright?" He asked with a mix of curiosity and worry.

She had no idea what to tell him.

"I don't know what that was." She shifted a little unsure and gestured to the book. "But I think one of you guys should pick that book up."

Both Stephen and Wong nodded. Stephen went to unchain the book and then brought it over to the wooden table. She stood on one side of him while Wong stood on the other. One of his arms shot out and wound itself around her. She wasted no time in cuddling into his side and getting comfortable. The other hand opened the book and started flipping pages.

They all began to read the book together. The book had an unbelievable amount of information in it. It turned out the Guardians were an actual race of people not just a bunch of super sorcerers like she first thought. The even had ancient spells that they created. According to what the book said, they were extremely hard to master and it would take a regular sorcerer a long time to do so. There were so many different kinds. Some for summoning different creatures, some for shape shifting and there were some for destruction. They even had spells for mind manipulation. No wonder the damn book was locked up. If it fell into the wrong hands there was no telling what could happen. Stephen continued to flip through the pages until they happened upon an entry on the *Dragon's Tear*. Apparently, it ran on her emotions. When she was feeling a good emotion like love or happiness, its power would become much more intensified and if she was feeling negative emotions something… evil would happen. It didn't seem to say exactly what though. But she had a feeling that she would possibly lose control of it and cause the destruction of the entire universe. She thought about the other night when she and Stephen were in the bathtub. The *Dragon's Tear* must have been reacting to her and Stephen's love. That thought caused her eyes soften, she had no idea that her and Stephen's love was that…strong. She remembered vaguely that her 'mother' told her once that love was the strongest magic of all. She supposed that she was right.

As she continued to read, she determined that the *Dragon's Tear* had been infused with the actual soul of a dragon and that was what gave the user the ability to transform. The user literally melded their soul with the dragon's soul that resided inside the relic and that allowed them to transform. Their transformation of course depended on how much they were tapped into the relic. The more that they tapped into the relic, the harder it was to control. Reading that, she was happy that she didn't given into the relic and try to tap into it all of the way what a disastrous mess that would have been.

Stephen continued to flip through the pages and then they came across something very disturbing to say the least. Apparently, there was something called the 'Elder Guardians' these Guardians ruled over the rest of the Guardians and made sure everything remained just and peaceful. There were six of them. One of them wanted to evolve their magic and tried to make it stronger. The other 'Elder Guardians' were opposed to this knowing that it would end in disaster but that one Elder Guardian refused to listen to them. This was how dark magic was born. The resulting magic that the Elder Guardian created was so dark and tainted that it darkened the heart of the Elder Guardian and he had
to be destroyed. The magic he created was apparently locked away in a place that only a 'Guardian' or a 'Descendant of a Guardian' can access. Well that explained how the universe would go to hell if she fell to evil.

Suddenly, another thought popped into her mind. She knew what Mordo wanted to do with her now. He wanted to make her into an all-powerful magical weapon and that broke her heart. She had to remind herself that this Mordo wasn't her Mordo anymore and there was nothing that she could do about it. She knew that she was safe with Stephen and Wong. But it still made her really sad to think that somebody that she cared about so much at one point could want to do that to her. She made a face as she tried to shake away those thoughts. It would do her no good to think them in this place. She knew that Stephen and Wong could sense something was wrong with her.

"Sweetheart, are you alright?" Stephen asked worriedly.

"Sort of, this is just a lot to take in that's all." She explained.

Stephen gave her a sympathetic nod.

"Would you like to stop for now? We know the book is here now so we can always come back." He suggested.

She began to feel a little sick, possibly from the strength of the magic in the place. So she nodded at his suggestion.

"I think that would be the best idea. I'm feeling not so hot." She admitted.

Stephen gave her a soft look and placed a warm kiss on her temple. Wong came around to her other side and gave her a reassuring pat on the shoulder. While Stephen chained the book back up, Wong opened a portal to get back to the Sanctum. She wasted no time in entering the portal and breathed a sigh of relief when entered back into the sanctum on the other side. She reveled in the feeling of being back there enjoying the hum of magic that was familiar to her. She already began to feel better again. Not minutes later, both Stephen and Wong popped out of the portal.

She could sense that nobody knew exactly what to say after learning all of that information, not even Stephen had a smartass remark about any of it. All she knew was that she desperately needed a break from all things magical for a bit.

Sometime Later

Irena

Irena currently sat in her favorite spot in the whole Sanctum. The living room or lounge, it was so quiet and peaceful and she felt as if she could finally relax a bit. She lounged on the couch and drew in her art book contentedly. She wasn't any Picasso by any means but it did relax her when she got stressed. She ended up finding both her art pencils and her art book in that box of stuff that stupid Courtney left in the corner of her room for her. She got Sapphire to strike a pose and was trying to sketch her. Suddenly, the cloak levitated into the room and tried to push Sapphire out of the way!

She could sense that it wanted her to draw it instead of Sapphire. This of course pissed off Sapphire and a fight ensued. The cloak was trying to slap Sapphire and Sapphire was trying to nip and growl at the cloak. She found the whole situation ridiculous and couldn't stop the laughter that bubbled up from inside of her. She started laughing so loudly that she buried her head in her art pad to try and muffle the sound. She could sense that Stephen was coming now possibly to check out just what was going on. Sure enough, he entered the lounge. She saw that he traded his 'sorcerer garb' as he called it for something a little more casual. He had on a crisp white shirt rolled up to his forearms as usual
and pair of causal black pants on both of which fit him unbelievably well. He tied off the whole look
with a nice looking pair of black shoes. His hair was also combed back neatly without a hair out of
place. If she wasn't laughing so hard she would be able to enjoy the view properly.

"Well isn't this is shocking." Stephen said sarcastically.

She was laughing so hard that she couldn't even respond to him. She watched him take the situation
in his own hands.

"Come on, break it up you two." He coaxed, trying to separate them.

Unfortunately, it didn't work and they just ended up chasing each other out of the room.

Shaking his head, Stephen went to sit with her. He lifted her legs so he could rest them on his lap.

"Those two sure do make quite the pair don't they?" She laughed.

"You don't say." Stephen remarked.

She and Stephen sat in a pleasant silence for a moment. He let one of his hands stroke up and down
her leg. She sighed happily. It sure felt good to relax. Soon, their pleasant silence was interrupted
when her ass suddenly beeped. Wriggling around for a moment, she extricated her cell phone from
her pocket. It indicated that she had a text; she opened her phone and discovered that the text was
from Darcy. She read the text and couldn't help the smile that came onto her face. Darcy was inviting
her and Stephen over to her apartment for what she called a 'Nintendo Party'. Basically it was just
playing a lot of Nintendo and ordering take out but it was exactly what she needed right now. She
knew that Darcy wanted it be like a double date and she thought it was a great idea. Suddenly all she
could picture was Stephen trying to play Nintendo and she couldn't help the snort of laughter that
escaped her.

'Oh, this is going to be so much fun!' She thought to herself.

Stephen gave her a look that said 'okay, you better tell me what is going on right now!'

"Okay sweetheart, what are you giggling about?" He asked, she could sense his curiosity along with
a bit of apprehension.

"Well you see here's the thing; Darcy invited us over to her apartment for what she calls a 'Nintendo
Party'. It's just pretty much take out and video games. It'll be fun, kind of like a double date without
all the hassle of going out somewhere." She explained.

He gave her a look and she could sense he was on the verge of saying 'no'. She inwardly rolled her
eyes, of course he was.

"Come on Stephen! Don't be a stuffy old man, I promise you it'll be fun!" She coaxed.

He gave her the stink eye at being called a 'stuffy old man' but she could tell she had him thinking
about it. She gave him the puppy eyes and pout lip for good measure.

"Please Stephen, I really need a break from everything and this will be perfect." She begged.

"Alright fine! Just quit looking at me with those eyes of yours and don't call me a stuffy old man
again." He relented.

She let out a giggle but nodded. She knew that Stephen wasn't actually mad at her for calling him
"Fair enough." She agreed.

Gently, Stephen moved her legs out of the way and got up off of the couch. He made the well-practiced arm movements to open a portal. Putting her art pad and pencils to the side, she got up off of the couch to enter the portal with him. Stephen popped out of the portal onto Darcy's apartment first, and she popped out right after. This time, she ended up almost kissing the floor but Stephen caught her before she could. He gave her an affectionate look and helped her get back onto her feat. Unfortunately, she almost got knocked back off of her feet again by the force of Darcy's bone crushing hug. Darcy also gave Stephen a bone crushing hug too. She could sense that he was a little awkward about it but she thought it was adorable. Bucky also gave her a hug (a little less bone crushing than Darcy's hug) and gave Stephen a friendly pat on the shoulder.

"Come on, Stephen. You really gotta check out this Nintendo. It's really neat." Bucky said.

Stephen gave her a nervous look as Bucky tried to lead him to the couch and coffee table where the Nintendo was situated. She could really sense that Stephen was more than nervous through the bond. She knew it was about his hands. She turned to him and stroked his chest softly knowing it would calm him down.

"Stephen relax, everybody is going to suck at Nintendo believe me so don't worry so much. Just go and have some fun." She said reassuringly.

Stephen let out a sigh and nodded.

"Alright sweetheart for you I'll try but don't expect me to like it." He grumbled.

She inwardly rolled her eyes.

'Oh stop being such a grumpy pants, Stephen.' She thought knowing full well that he would read her thoughts.

Sure enough he let out a noise indicating that he did in fact read her thoughts but let himself be led away by Bucky anyway. Both She and Darcy shook their heads in exasperation. They watched as Bucky led him to the couch. He sat down while Bucky set up the Nintendo and got it going. Clearly, Darcy had taught him some things. Bucky picked up one controller and handed the other one to Stephen. He turned it on and Super Mario 3 popped up onto the screen. She and Darcy watched Stephen and Bucky play for bit. Stephen died a lot but then again so did Bucky it was quite hilarious to watch at first but then she started sensing Stephen's extreme frustration through the bond again. He knew that he was getting bothered by his hands again. Darcy turned to her.

"Hey girlie, I think maybe you should think about going to bail out your man now before he pitches the controller into the tv." Darcy suggested.

She nodded in agreement.

"I think you might be onto something there, D." She agreed.

She quickly made her way over to Stephen and nestled herself between his legs on the couch. Gently, she took the controller from his shaking hands. She knew that they were shaking more than usual due to his extreme frustration. She stroked his thigh to calm him down some, then helped him position his large hands over hers on the controller and taught him how to play. She could sense that he was enjoying himself much more now. Darcy went to go and join Bucky to help him learn to play too. Gently, Stephen rested his chin on her shoulder as she taught him to play and she couldn't help
but rub her face against his.

It felt so good not to worry about anything to do with her magic and what it could do even if it was just for an evening.

It felt so so good to just feel HAPPY for once.
After crawling through the big magical door, 4 year old Irena collapsed onto the ground and tried to catch her breath. She had never had to run so far and so fast in all her entire life. As she righted herself with some effort, she suddenly knew that somebody was approaching. She didn't know how she knew that but she just somehow did. Sure enough, a lady came into the room in wherever she was and approached her. The lady had kind eyes and wore very fancy robes. Of course her little girl brain also saw that she had no hair but she knew better than to ask why that was. The lady gave her a kind look and helped her back onto her feet.

"Come with me young one, you must be tired and starving." The kind lady said.

Immediately, her instincts came to life and told her that she shouldn't be going somewhere with somebody that she didn't know. Her mama taught her never to go anywhere with somebody that she didn't know. She looked at the kind lady with apprehension. The kind lady seemed to know exactly what the problem was.

"You are right to trust in your instincts but I assure you that you are safe here, now come." She reassured.

Knowing that anything was better than was just happened to her, she decided to follow the kind lady. As she was being led from the room, somebody started pounding on the big wooden door and then they started shouting.

"Open up! I know my daughter is in there! I want her back now!" The voice roared.

She flinched at the yelling. Her papa was here and he was so mad. She was shocked that the kind lady didn't even seem to care that her papa was yelling. The kind lady led her out of the room without so much of a second at glance at the big wooden door. She completely ignored all of the pounding and the shouting. She was led to another room with a lot more room people and they were all sitting at wooden tables eating. The kind lady helped her get seated and then left her momentarily to go find her some food. As she sat alone, she began to fidget. She didn't know where she was and she was scared. Looking around, she saw that there was a dark-skinned man sitting a little bit away from her. He seemed to be looking at her with curiosity. She flinched away a little bit. He noticed this and frowned. He gave her a gentle look and introduced himself.

"Hello my name is Karl Mordo, I assure you there is no need to fear me. May I ask what your name is little one?" He asked gently.

End Dream/Memory
Suddenly, Irena's mismatched eyes snapped open and she sat up quickly. She clamped her right hand over her mouth to avoid letting out a startled noise. She let out several deep breaths to try and calm herself down. Letting out a small sigh, she pulled her knees up to her chest and let her head rest against them. As she began to calm down, she tried to process the repressed memory that she just went through. Suddenly, they seemed to be all about 'Mr. Mordo' all the time. She supposed it had something to do with the fact that 'Mr. Mordo' was the one that she attached herself to the most. She was beginning to understand why her 'Mother' modified her memories because all of this really royally sucked. Too bad her memories couldn't have been permanently modified so she wouldn't have to go through this. Thankfully, it was happening to her now and not when she was at the orphanage or something like that. She at least now had the faculties to deal with it properly…mostly.

Looking to her left, she saw that Stephen was still sleeping soundly next to her somehow. She didn't know how he didn't wake up from feeling her emotions through the bond but she was sure glad he managed to remain sleeping. It was lousy enough that she had to suffer through this crap; she really hated it when she took Stephen down with her. Her mismatched eyes softened as she watched Stephen sleeping soundly next to her. Gently, she stroked her hand through his dark, messy hair. Even in his sleep, she could sense that he enjoyed it and tried to move closer to her hand. She honestly had no idea how she would be dealing with all this crap without him. She knew that she couldn't be without him and wouldn't have it any other way now. She NEEDED him and she knew that she couldn't be without him now.

Inwardly letting out a sigh, she turned her attention from Stephen to the bedside table. Picking up her phone, she unlocked it to check what time it was. It was 6:30am in the morning because of course it was. She ran her hand through her messy curls. She knew that here was no way on god's green earth that she could go back to sleep now. She decided to instead get up and go make some breakfast. She knew that Stephen would eventually get up to come and join her at some point anyway. While, she wasn't super hungry, she had to do SOMETHING to get her mind off the memory plus she knew that Stephen would be hungry when he woke up and that Wong would want to eat too.

As quietly as she could, she exited the bed and went to the bathroom to relieve herself and clean up a little bit. Finishing up quickly, she exited the bathroom and sought out her workout clothes. Because she was feeling so crappy, workout clothes were as good as it was going to get today. She found her yoga pants and 'bite me' tank top and threw them on. She also located one of her bandanas too. She wanted to get all of her crazy hair out of her face. She knew that neither Stephen nor Wong would want a side order of 'essence of Irena' with their breakfast so getting it all out of the way was the best thing to do. She also pulled out a pair of mismatched socks too. This time they were green and blue. She decided forgo the shoes today because the only thing that she wanted to do was get Stephen to teach her to meditate. She hoped to crap it would help her deal with her shitty emotions better than she was now. As she opened the door to exit Stephen's room, she was 'attacked' by both the cloak and Sapphire. They seemed to sense that she wasn't quite herself to day. The cloak 'hugged' her and Sapphire climbed up into her shoulder. She sort of curled up there the best she could and cloak stayed wrapped around her.

Gently, she shut the door behind her and padded softly to the kitchen. Before entering the kitchen, she gave Sapphire a command to go play because she was pretty sure 'essence of Sapphire' was just as bad as 'essence of Irena' and got her stool out. The cloak however, refused to part with her no matter what she told it to do. She climbed up onto her stool cloak and all and wasted no time in getting to work. She located potatoes and cut them up for hash browns. She also pulled some bacon from the freezer and eggs from the fridge. She was going all out. Breakfast was her favorite meal and she knew having a good breakfast would go a long way in making her feel better. As she got the food cooking, she could sense that Stephen had woken up probably because of the smell. She knew he would be joining her shortly and she knew that would also go a long way in improving her mood too. Sure enough, he appeared in the entrance of the kitchen. He was gazing at her tenderly. She saw
that he was already fully dressed because of course he was. As she got to know Stephen that was one thing she noticed about him right away. He was immaculate in his appearance. Like she was pretty sure that he didn't own even one pair of jeans. Not that she had any problems with that at all because those pants and shirts he always wore fit him like a dream. It was one of the many things she adored about him.

He wasted no time in approaching her. He took in her appearance and let out a soft sigh. She knew that he could sense her fatigue. He lifted his hands to her face and his thumbs traced the dark circles under her mismatched eyes. Slowly, he moved his thumbs from the circles under her eyes and caressed her cheeks softly.

"You are exhausted." He said softly.

"Mmm hmm." She murmured in agreement.

"Did you see another memory in your dreams?" He asked knowingly.

She nodded.

"Yeah I did. They're all about Mordo now, Stephen. I don't know how much more of this crap I can take." She told him truthfully.

Looking at her sympathetically, he opened his arms to her and she wasted no time in entering his embrace cloak and all. She buried her face into his chest and let out a soft sigh. His arms wrapped around her and they stayed that way for several minutes. She felt one of his large hands find its way underneath the cloak and then underneath her tank top. It began to make sweeping motions on her lower back. She almost died and went to heaven right on the spot. His hand was warm and it felt so, so good. She let herself stay all wrapped up in his embrace of a few more minutes and then she forced herself to part from him reluctantly otherwise the food would burn. The whole time she finished preparing breakfast, Stephen didn't part from her unless he had to reach something for her. He seemed to know that she needed him close to her right now. Even though she still felt extremely fatigued, her mood had marginally improved thankfully. She plated the finished food and watched Stephen levitate the plates over to the little table and chairs. Watching Stephen do this, she decided that at some point that she would ask him to teach her how to do that.

They both sat down at the small table. It took her an extra minute to re-arrange herself so that she could comfortably sit without squishing the cloak too badly because it simply refused to disengage from her. Stephen was watching the whole scene with affection.

"You think this is funny, don't you?" She griped.

Stephen let out a warm chuckle.

"The cloak simply adores you my little love. It knows you are sad and wants to cheer you up." He laughed.

He was right and it was working. It was helping her feel better and it seemed to realize this. It tightened around her as if giving her a hug. She could sense that was 'happy' or as 'happy' as a cloak could be anyway. Feeling her appetite improve a little, she began to eat her breakfast and Stephen joined in with her. They sat in companionable silence until she broke it.

"Stephen, do you think you could teach me to meditate today? I think it would go a long way in sorting out my emotions." She asked him.

"I think it might help with me learning how to heal too." She added.
Stephen gave her a warm look and nodded.

"Sure sweetheart, that's actually a great idea. How about after we finish our breakfast we go to my study and I will give you a lesson on meditation? Does that sound good?" He suggested.

She made a noise of agreement between bites of food.

"Yes please! That sounds perfect!" She agreed.

She managed to get about half her breakfast down before she just couldn't eat anymore and dumped her remaining food onto Stephen's plate. She knew that he wouldn't mind. However, a worried look formed on Stephen's face and she understood why. Normally, she was usually the one hoovering all the leftovers from either his or Wong's plate not the other way around. She grabbed his slightly shaking hand and gave it a reassuring squeeze.

"It's okay, Stephen. I just can't eat properly when I'm this tired that's all." She explained.

Stephen nodded in understanding and she could sense that her explanation alleviated some of his worry.

"Alright sweetheart, would you like a nap after you meditate? It might help you sleep better." He suggested.

She nodded. That was probably a good idea.

"Sure, that sounds like a good idea." She agreed.

"Good girl." He said softly, pushing back some of her curls that escaped her bandana.

She and Stephen got up from the little table and began to clean up the kitchen. She made sure to keep a plate of food for Wong to eat. She knew that Wong would be along to eat at some point soon. Sure enough, just as she and Stephen were finishing up cleaning the kitchen Wong appeared in the doorway looking extremely put out because he missed breakfast. However, when he saw her she knew that he could sense that she wasn't herself and refrained from making any snarky remarks. She gave him a thankful look for that. After showing him where his plate of food was, she and Stephen left the kitchen and walked in a companionable silence to his Study. After entering the room, she finally managed to get the cloak to disengage from her with a little effort and she made her way over to Stephen's desk. With little effort, she hopped up onto it and sat cross-legged. She looked at Stephen curiously.

"So how does this meditation thing work?" She asked curiously.

Stephen let out a warm chuckle.

"Eager are we?" He chuckled.

She smiled at him and nodded.

"Always." She agreed.

"Alright, in order for this to work you must relax and clear your mind completely." He instructed.

She tried to do as he said but it proved easier said than done because she fidgeted so damn much. Stephen sensed this and helped her to calm down. He stroked the sides of her face and ran his hands down her arms. As he did this, she felt herself begin to relax and calm down. Her eyes began to
slowly drift shut.

"That's it, concentrate on my voice and let all of the thoughts drift away." He murmured into her ear.

She could sense that he was very close to her. At the timbre of his voice, she felt herself relax even more. Even though Stephen continued to talk she could no longer make out what he was saying. She felt herself drift away completely and it felt glorious.

**Two Hours Later**

**Irena**

Suddenly, Irena's mismatched eyes popped open and she looked around. She was so relaxed that her limbs felt like rubber. So that was meditation. She could get used to that, she felt so much better. She was still tired of course but now she didn't feel like her emotions were eating her alive anymore which was awesome. Turning around, she found Stephen sitting in his chair reading the old brown book she found the other day. She meant to tell him about that. Ooops.

"Hey." She said softly.

He looked up from the book and smiled at her.

"Hey yourself, you look much better now. How do you feel?" He asked curiously.

She smiled back at him.

"A whole lot better actually. I think I am going to have to make this a regular thing." She replied.

He nodded in agreement at the idea.

"I think that is a fantastic idea. Say, would you be up to practicing your healing a little bit?" He asked her.

She thought for a moment and then nodded back to him. She might as well give it a try while she was feeling good.

"Sure! Might as well while I'm feeling good." She agreed.

He shifted her so she was facing him completely and her legs were dangling over the edge of the desk. Her legs were now nestled between his. She watched him for a moment and could tell that the gears were turning in his brain. That was never a good sign. She wondered just what in the hell he was thinking of until it hit her.

"You aren't thinking of trying to drop another book on Wong's foot are you?" She asked dreading the answer.

He remained silent for a moment and then made a so-so gesture which caused her to face palm.

"Stephen no, that's not fair to Wong. Plus I should learn how to channel the light energy needed to heal an injury first." She tried to explain to him.

Stephen pouted but relented. This caused her to roll her eyes. She swore that he only wanted to drop another book on Wong's foot just to be an asshole. What a dick.

"You are such a dick you know that?" She said, shaking her head.
"Hey!" He gave her the stink eye and yelled in protest. "I am not a dick; I was only trying to help you! Plus you know as well as I do that Wong can just heal it himself anyway."

She sighed and rubbed the side of her head.

"I know, but I really don't wanna cause Wong pain just so I can practice healing." She mumbled softly.

Stephen looked at her tenderly.

"I know you don't sweetheart. Let's just practice channeling the light energy and see what happens." He soothed gently.

Giving Stephen a relieved look, she nodded.

She tried to think of only happy things to bring out the best emotions she could. Her mind was clear and she felt good but this was still hard as hell for her. Nothing was happening and she let out an annoyed sigh. She tried again and again to channel the right emotions to no avail. Suddenly, she could feel Stephen sending her love through the bond. He was looking at her with affection. She could sense that he wanted her to use it like a boost of sorts. She tried it again and suddenly she felt very warm inside in a very good way.

Her palm started glowing white and she looked at Stephen with shock written all over her face.

"I knew you could do it!" He praised.

She looked at him happily.

"That felt amazing!" She said happily.

He looked at her intensely. She loved it when he looked at her that way.

"You are amazing." He intoned softly.

He pulled her closer to him and gave her a tender kiss filled with love. When oxygen became a necessity, the parted albeit reluctantly and he continued to look at her tenderly. She knew that he could sense that her fatigue was returning. He stroked the side of her face.

"You are tired; you should go take a nap." He suggested.

She made a face. She was reluctant to part from him but she nodded.

"Okay, fine." She said in a mock whiney voice.

He chuckled.

"Oh my tiny little love, you won't be missing much I promise you." He chuckled softly.

Even though she really didn't want to, she got up from Stephen's desk and walked to the entrance of his study. Before she left, she bit Stephen goodbye and the cloak gave her a parting 'hug'. She quietly made her way to Stephen's room. She wasted no time in removing her pants and socks and hopping into bed. She didn't bother removing her bandana because it would help keep her wild hair from getting even more tangled than it already was and it wasn't as if it bothered her when it was anyway. She crawled into Stephen's bed and got comfortable. It took no time at all for Sapphire to jump on the bed and join her. It took her only a few minutes to conk out. She was way more tired than she thought she was.
Sometime Later

Irena

Letting out a soft yawn, Irena stretched languidly. She felt leaps and bounds better. A nap was exactly what she needed. Sitting up, she checked her phone and saw that she had a new text message. She opened it and frowned. It was from Sam. Well wasn't that a proverbial kick in the nads. It wasn't that she hated Sam or anything but they had a little bit of a bumpy history. Not long after she broke up with Toby, Sam became interested in her and tried to ask her out. It did not go well at all. She just wasn't ready for anything like that and it was difficult to get him to understand that. Since then, their relationship had been up and down which was probably why he was not at her birthday party. She could see the disaster that would have been. She decided that she would just deal with him later; she had far more important things on her mind at the moment. She checked the time on her phone and realized that it was close to dinner time. Her stomach growled loudly to prove that point. Now that she felt more like herself she wanted to eat. She decided that she would get dinner ready for her, Stephen and Wong. Getting out of bed, she put her pants and socks back on. She saw that Sapphire was still sleeping on her pillow and decided to just let her sleep. After making sure all her hair was still secure in her bandana and that she looked okay, she left Stephen's bedroom. She headed to the kitchen. Entering the kitchen she got her stool out again and started getting ingredients ready for chicken fried rice, spring rolls and dumplings. She knew that it was Stephen and Wong's favorite and she wanted to surprise them.

Not long into her efforts, the cloak suddenly levitated into the kitchen and started clinging to her. She could sense that something was not right. She looked at it with frown on her face.

"What is the matter with you?" She asked it curiously.

She could sense it was very upset about something. It pulled back and she could see a good sized wet spot in the middle of it and her eyebrows knitted together in confusion.

'What in the HELL is that?' She wondered to herself.

Suddenly, she caught a whiff of something yucky and figured out pretty quickly just what the stain on the cloak was. What the hell? How did the cloak get peed on? She thought for a moment and then the light bulb came on. The cloak was probably picking away at Sapphire and Sapphire finally retaliated by peeing on it. She faceplamed. Good lord almighty.

"So do you wanna tell me how you got peed on?" She asked it.

The cloak suddenly made a sheepish gesture and she knew she hit the nail right on the proverbial head.

"Maybe don't pick at Sapphire so much next time, yeah?" She said to it.

She could sense that the cloak was agreeing with her vehemently.

"Would you like me to clean you up or did you want me to go and find Stephen for you?" She asked it.

It wrapped one of its ends around her left wrist and she took the gesture as a sign that it was okay with her cleaning it up. She retrieved some vinegar and baking soda from one of the kitchen cupboards. Thankfully, she was well versed in the art of cleaning up pee stains from living at the orphanage. Not from her of course, but she looked after a lot of the kids there because Mrs. Williams was always so run ragged. After finding the required items, she gestured for the cloak to follow her.
and she went to Stephens's bathroom with it. She told it to stay put while she went to retrieve some laundry detergent. When she got back, she asked to sit in the sink.

"Just so you know, I have to make the water cold make sure the stain comes out. Once the stain is gone I can put it back to hot. Sorry if this sucks." She warned the cloak.

The cloak seemed to understand her and it positioned itself in the sink. She showed the bottle of vinegar to the cloak.

"Before I douse you in cold water I want to rub a little of this in the stain it should help with the smell." She explained.

The cloak seemed to understand what she wanted to do and waited for her to put it on the stain. She poured a bit on and massaged it into the stain and she could tell the cloak was enjoying it immensely. After the vinegar was all massaged in, she turned on the tap to cold water so she could rinse it out and the cloak shuddered.

"Sorry about that." She apologized.

She repeated the process with the baking soda. She knew it would also work to neutralize the smell and get rid of the stain. After she was finished rinsing it the second time, she could see the stain had gone. Thankfully the cloak hadn't been stuck like that for very long so the stain was easy to get out. She turned the tap to hot, and poured a bit of laundry detergent in the water. She rinsed the cloak in the soapy water to make sure she had all of the vinegar and baking soda out. It seemed really happy now. As she was doing this, she felt that Stephen was coming. Oh crap. She sure hoped he wouldn't want to kill Sapphire for this. Stephen entered the bathroom and looked at the scene in front of him curiously.

"What is going on in here?" He asked curiously.

"Um well, you see. Please don't kill Sapphire because it wasn't her fault and I can't stress that enough but the cloak kind of got peed on. It was picking on Sapphire and Sapphire retaliated by peeing on it. I am just cleaning it up." She explained.

For a moment, she thought he looked like he wanted to go search Sapphire out but then it disappeared as quickly as it came. Now she sensed that he was just curious about something instead.

"What…are you curious about and why aren't you going to kill Sapphire?" She asked in confusion.

She watched Stephen laugh out right at her question.

"I am curious because this is the first time the cloak as let somebody else wash it but me and I can't go and kill Sapphire for something that wasn't all her fault in all fairness." He explained.

She supposed she couldn't argue with his logic there. She just had to ask him why the cloak didn't let anybody but Stephen wash it until now.

"So why doesn't the cloak let anybody else wash it until now?" She asked curiously.

Stephen looked sheepish at the question.

"Well, Christine tried to put in the washing machine once and it freaked out. Ever since then it refused to let anybody but me wash it until you now." He explained.

She looked at him in shock.
”Why in the crap would you let her do that? The cloak is a living thing for shit’s sakes!” She exclaimed in shock.

He looked indignant at her explanation.

”Well, in my defence she had done it before I realized what she did.” He said defending himself.

Well, she supposed that she couldn't blame him for the incident then. She looked at him with understanding.

”Alright, I understand.” She conceded.

”Thank you, so how are you so good at getting stains out?” He asked curiously.

She sighed she knew that one was coming.

”The lady that ran the orphanage was always run ragged with too many kids. Since I was one of the older kids there and I had a brain unlike some of them, I helped her take care of a lot of them. Some of them were quite young and still had issues with potty training.” She explained with a shrug.

At her explanation, Stephen was looking at her intensely. He entered her personal space.

”So selfless, you are so beyond perfect my little love.” He murmured.

He bent down to her level and kissed her soundly. She let out a happy noise. Suddenly, their moment was destroyed by the cloak splashing water on the both of them for interrupting it's bath. She supposed it was the cloak equivalent of flipping them off. She and Stephen both rolled their eyes at it.

After she finished washing the cloak, it rung itself out and gave her the cloak equivalent of a hug. She could sense it was happy. She explained to Stephen that she had been in the middle of trying to make dinner when the cloak came to her. Stephen agreed to help her finish it. After they put everything away, they went to go finish up dinner and the cloak followed them like an obedient puppy. She had a feeling it would be like that for a while now. It took no them at all to get dinner going again. When they were half way done, Wong came to help them. The three of them finished making dinner and the three of them crowed around the little table to eat. Halfway through the meal, she sensed that Stephen's demeanor suddenly changed and she could tell he was trying to cover it up. He excused himself from the tiny table and left. Just like that. Both she and Wong looked at the each other in confusion. What in the blue fuck was that all about? She shrugged it off for now and finished her meal. She helped Wong clean up and then went to go find Stephen. Her curiosity got the better of her; she just had to know what he was up to. She felt him out through the bond and determined that he was in the bedroom. She managed to shoo the cloak away from her before she got to the bedroom. She was certain that whatever Stephen was doing he wouldn't want the cloak interrupting it.

Entering the bedroom, she saw that most of the lights were off but the bathroom was still dimly lit and the door was half open. Now she was really curious. She opened the bathroom door and almost cried at the scene front of her. Stephen had run her a bath complete with bubble bath and candles. How he did this in such a short time span she did not know. She felt his hands on her shoulders and she whirled around to face him. He was looking at her with such love; it made her heart feel so good.

”Stephen, this is amazing.” She murmured.

She reached up on her tippy toes to give him a sound kiss on the mouth.
"You are amazing sweetheart and I wanted you to know that." He murmured back.

He helped her undress slowly and she did the same for him. They both climbed into the bath tub. Stephen sat down first and then she nestled herself between his legs. He wasted no time in plucking one of those floofy sponges she liked so much off of the ledge of the bath tub and began washing her with it.

"You are always taking care of everybody but yourself. Let me take care of you." He mumbled into her neck.

At the moment, she wanted nothing more than that.
To Deal with Some Unrequited Love

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey everybody who is enjoying this! I thought I would throw up another chapter before I left for work, enjoy. Just so people aren't wondering I have 40 chapters of this story already done so that is why I would thought I would let everybody know so you all aren't WTF where is all this coming from so fast! Thanks again for the kudos they rock! Happy reading!

Stephen

Stephen let out a long sigh. He and Irena were currently lounging in bed enjoying a comfortable silence. She was all curled up in his lap and he was letting his hand caress up and down her side in smooth motions. He heard her release a muffled sigh and she tried to bury her face further into his stomach. He could feel the contentment positively dripping from her. It made him happy to know that he was the cause of her contentment. All her life she had been forced to take care of everybody else. She had been taking care of others from such a young age that she never even got to have a proper childhood or got to grow up being taken care of properly by people who loved her like she should have been. She was like a little treasure. Treasures like her are meant to be loved, well looked after and cared for not tossed aside like her biological father did to her because he thought her magic to be a curse. Or used for ill gain the like the Mordo wanted to do and even some of the sorcerers at Kamar-Taj tried to do. Thinking that made his anger spike a little bit, Kamar-Taj was supposed to be a safe-haven for anybody wanting to learn the Mystic Arts. She even got that taken away from her too. He thought a bit more about Mordo and he felt some sadness bleed into his anger. Mordo had been his first friend at Kamar-Taj, not only had he rescued him when he was being mugged and got him his watch back but he also taught him so much about the Mystic Arts during his training. Now, he was no longer that person that he once knew because he lost his heart to darkness. He lost a good friend and Irena lost the first father figure that she ever had that didn't treat her like garbage.

Not liking the road that his thoughts were going down, he forced them from his mind. He turned his attention back to his little treasure. He could see that she was falling back asleep again. Unfortunately as much as he wanted to just let her sleep, he couldn't do that because he did have to get up and leave soon. It was really the last thing he wanted to do but he DID have a job he had to do. Recently, he and Wong had been investigating a young girl that had been having bizarre dreams. Today he had to go and meet her to determine what was really going on with her. Whether it was magically related or not, he would make sure that she got the help that she needed. In speaking to the mother of the girl, it took him not long at all to realize that this girl was a lot like Irena in the sense that she was care giver instead of the one being cared for. It was just the girl and her mother. Just by talking to the mother, he could see that she was falling back asleep again. Unfortunately as much as he wanted to just let her sleep, he couldn't do that because he did have to get up and leave soon. It was really the last thing he wanted to do but he DID have a job he had to do. Recently, he and Wong had been investigating a young girl that had been having bizarre dreams. Today he had to go and meet her to determine what was really going on with her. Whether it was magically related or not, he would make sure that she got the help that she needed. In speaking to the mother of the girl, it took him not long at all to realize that this girl was a lot like Irena in the sense that she was care giver instead of the one being cared for. It was just the girl and her mother. Just by talking to the mother, he could tell that she was just like the single mothers who used to throw themselves at him when he was a doctor. He wasn't by far the only doctor that this happened to. It happened to any eligible male in the hospital that they could get their hands on. He held back a shudder at the memories. They were always, needy, desperate and most of them were pretty nasty. He had a feeling that this one would be no different but he had to help that little girl. Whether it was dream parasite that he had to destroy or something else. Knowing Irena had opened his eyes to so many things that he had no idea about and he would be damned if he let this little girl suffer in silence.

Letting out a sigh through his nose, he moved his hand from her side to cup her perfect curvy ass and
he gave it a small squeeze. She made a small annoyed noise at the gesture. Instead of removing his hand, he continued to massage and knead the flesh there instead. Even though she let out an annoyed noise at his ministrations, her emotions through the bond told him different. He could sense that she was enjoying his touch immensely.

"Why are you so obsessed with my ass?" She asked in mock annoyance.

He laughed outright at her question.

"Hey, in my defence it's not my fault that your ass is just that delectable." He countered playfully.

Even though he couldn't see her face, he could sense that she was rolling her eyes at him.

"You are so incorrigible." She mumbled softly.

"Not my fault you are so delectable." He mumbled back to her, continuing his ministrations.

They sat in a companionable silence for a few more moments and then she spoke again. He knew that she could sense his shifting emotions.

"You are going to tell me something that I'm going to hate, aren't you?" She said knowingly.

Letting out a soft noise, he stopped his ministrations and nudged her gently. He coaxed her into getting up right so he could talk to her properly. She shifted her body so she was nestled between his legs and her head was resting against his chest. She held one of his scarred hands in her small hands stroking and rubbing it while his other hand weaved itself into her messy tresses.

"Yes." He admitted softly.

"You see Wong and I have been investigating a little girl having bizarre dreams. I need to go and assess the situation today. She lives alone with her mother and I cannot in good consciousness leave her to suffer on her own, do you understand?" He explained.

He felt her nod against his chest in understanding.

"I understand, but let me guess. The mother is a few crayons short of a full box?" She guessed knowingly.

He snickered a little at her assessment and then he answered her.

"Unfortunately, yes." He confirmed.

He felt her flinch slightly against him and her grasp on his hand tightened a little.

He understood her reaction. He knew that it was a combination of the bond and the fight they had all those days ago was magnifying the need to be close him all the time. He was also aware that she knew exactly what the mother would try with him and he knew that she hated it. He didn't like it either but he had to help that little girl. If she did indeed have a dream parasite attached to her he had to get rid of it.

"I know it sucks sweetheart, I'm sorry." He murmured, rubbing his nose against hers.

"Mmm, I know but you have to help that little girl it's your job. I know you that you are mine." She murmured back.

She turned to place a soft kiss on his lips. He thoroughly enjoyed hearing the words 'you are mine'
tumble out of her cute little mouth. It caused him to let out a desire filled growl into the kiss. He
knew that he had to have her now. But he also wanted to have a little fun too. He moved suddenly
off of the bed without much warning bringing her with him. She let out a surprised squeak at being
displaced so suddenly and it caused her to automatically wrap her legs around his waist. Without
breaking the kiss, he wasted no time in heading in the direction of the bathroom. He desperately
wanted to show her that a shower could be used for more than just getting clean.

Sometime Later

Irena

Irena and Stephen walked to the entrance of Sanctum hand and hand. Both fully dressed and ready
to go. She had on her regular band tee and skinny jeans ensemble. Today she decided to go with her
good old ‘Guns n’ Roses’ shirt. Stephen of course had his ‘sorcerer garb’ on as she affectionately
called it. She let out a soft sigh. She never felt more sated and relaxed in all her natural life. She had
no idea that showers could be used like that but she enjoyed it very much and it was something that
she wanted to do with Stephen again in the very, very near future. That had to be the most intense it
had ever been between her and Stephen. It felt like her legs were rubber and she was having
difficulty walking straight. She tried to mask that the best she could. Hell, her face still felt flushed.
She watched him glance at her with a shit-eating grin plastered to his handsome features and she stuck
her tongue out at him. He chuckled warmly at her.

As they reached the front door, he turned to her and placed his large hands on her shoulders. He
gazed down at her lovingly and gave her a searing kiss. As he did this, he magically called the cloak
to himself and it settled into his shoulders. She always found it to be really sexy when he did that. He
could sense what she thinking and let out a happy noise as he continued to kiss her until the need for
oxygen became too great. They parted from each other panting a little bit.

"Why do you always make it so hard to leave you?" He murmured, stroking the side of her face
tenderly.

She couldn't help the giggle that escaped her.

"It's a gift." She giggled.

She reached up and placed her one of her small hands on both sides of his face stroking gently as she
did so.

"Go and help that little girl. Everything will be fine, I promise." She said gently.

"Alright, please be good and stay out of trouble until I return." He ordered softly.

"Always." She said, nudging him towards the front door.

After bidding him one final goodbye, Stephen reluctantly left and she was alone. He hadn't even
been gone for three seconds and she already hated it but she had to put up with it. She decided to
keep herself busy the best she could because if she didn't she would lose her mind and she knew it.
First she tried practicing her guitar and that only worked for so long before she started thinking of
Stephen again. Then she tried working on her art but Sapphire was being a grouchy-ass and not co-
operating at all. She even tried to sit in the lounge and read a gossip rag but even that only kept her
busy for so long. All she kept on thinking about was Stephen snatching the magazine from her hands
and her chasing him down until she caught him. Immediately, that let to thoughts of a hot and heavy
make out session.
"Damnit all!" She thought in irritation.

Placing the gossip rag down onto the table next the couch, she got up and left the lounge. She decided that she would go clean and organize her tools. It was something she did every now and in again to make sure everything was still in working order. After she finished that, she would go and help Wong if he needed it. Whistling to herself, she walked down to the practice room. She got all of her tools out and dumped them onto the table. She began the task of checking them all and cleaning them. Halfway through her efforts, she suddenly felt somebody enter the Sanctum and her mismatched eyes became large. She knew that it was Sam and that caused her to let out a sigh.

'Crap balls almighty! This is so exactly what I need right now.' She thought to herself, rubbing the side of her head.

She could do nothing but wait for Sam to find her in the 'practice room'. She supposed it might be better to 'clear the air' than to let the problems between the two of them continue to fester and get out of control. Sure enough, it took him no time at all to find her. He entered the room with his wings under his arm looking at her intensely. He approached her without taking his dark eyes off of her and dropped his wings onto her table clearly not giving a flying crap about all of the tools she had lying all over it.

"I need you to tune my wings up." He said by way of explanation.

She gave him a look that clearly said 'Sure that's all you want' and he let out a sigh.

"Okay, I need you to tune my wings up and I wanted to talk to you." He amended.

"Alright, so talk." She stated getting to work on his wings.

"I want to know what the deal with all of this is. Why you refused to give me a chance but you are now dating somebody twice your age like it's nothing. Tell me how in the fuck that is fair to me?" He asked, desperation clearly coloring his tone.

She inwardly winced. She could feel that his feelings for her hadn't lessened in the least; in fact they've seemed to have gotten stronger. She sighed, this was not going to be a good conversation but she had to tell him the truth.

'Why, why, WHY is it always me?' She thought with sadness.

She didn't want to make Sam more upset than she sensed that he already was but she knew that it was impossible for her to hope for that. This was going to suck and nothing she could do would make it better.

"I'm sorry Sam but stuff happened that was beyond my control. I don't know if you heard but I am not exactly normal my any stretch of the imagination and Stephen his helping me to get control of my powers and it just kind of happened. Our magic just kind of bonded, there is no explanation for it, believe me I've looked. I'm sorry Sam, I really am, but he is everything and only he can be that for me. I don't know how else to explain it." She tried to explain.

She hoped by some miracle that Sam would understand her and not get even madder at the situation but she knew that was a huge pipe dream. She was right of course, she could feel how pissed off he was and it wasn't good.

"So you mean because of this bullshit bond you and that old fart have you can't be with me?" He asked incredulously.
She fought against the urge to make a face at the word 'old fart'. Stephen was many things but an old fart was certainly NOT one of them.

"Yes." She answered softly.

That was all it took. She could sense that Sam was lost. She could also sense that something was not right with Sam in the first place. She wondered if he was being influenced by her magic or the magic of the Sanctum. She would have to ask Stephen when he got back. Right now, she had to figure a way out of this mess before Sam flattened her sorry ass. Before she could even contemplate what to do, Wong suddenly appeared in the door way. His eyes were pitch black and she could feel his anger pulsing. It was saturating the room. He must have heard her and Sam arguing and came to see what in the hell was going on. Before she could even utter a word, he pushed her onto the floor and she landed hard into the cement floor with a high pitched squeak. Before she could even blink, he was on top of Sam trying to beat the ever-living crap out of him. Something wasn't right; he was acting like Stephen did when he lost control of the bond. But she wasn't bonded to Wong so what the HELL was this? Either way she had to put a stop to it before Wong ended Sam. Wong was trained in all kinds of Martial Arts and Sam wasn't. It wasn't a fair fight by a long shot.

"Wong! Sam! STOP IT!" She yelled but neither man heard her.

She pulled herself off of the ground. She did the only thing that she thought would work to separated them before it was too late. She summoned her magic. She was shocked to see that it worked on the first try. Not only did it work on the first try but it was so powerful that it almost overwhelmed her. Her eyes eclipsed to black for the first time in months and she could feel the magic crackling around her. Blue whips suddenly shot from her palms and she commanded one whip to wrap around Wong and the other whip to wrap around Sam and she forced them apart. Both men looked at her in shock clearly whatever spell they were under had broken.

"I said stop it now!" She yelled again, this time in a distorted voice that wasn't her own.

She didn't know what the deal with that was. It must be something to do with intensity of her magic at the moment.

Once she could sense that they were mostly back to normal, she called the blue whips back to herself and let her magic dissipate. Both men continued to stare at her in shock. She had no idea what that even was. It sure felt like she had lost control of her magic but clearly she didn't she was in full control of herself. The amount of power that had been coursing through her had been frightening. Before she could think about it anymore, Sam broke from him his trance first and she could see that he had a bloody nose. She moved him help him but he put a hand up. He merely picked up his wings and left without uttering a single word. She would be shocked if she didn't receive a phone call from Tony later about it. She would think about that later for now she had more important stuff to deal with.

She turned to Wong and saw that he looked ashen. She wasted no time in approaching him and leading him to a chair. He looked like he had no idea how to process what just took place, not that she did either. He also looked a little green like he thought Stephen might just kill him for all of this. She would make sure that didn't happen. She saw that he had a nasty looking fight-bite on his right hand. She gestured for him to give her his hand he complied. She examined the fight-bite. It looked deep and nasty. Well, she supposed there was on time like the present to practice her healing a little bit. She let her hand hover over Wong's and concentrated on her love for Stephen. She found that it gave her positive emotions the best boost. She concentrated on all of her positive emotions the best she could and felt that warm feeling wash over her that she loved so much. Her palm glowed white and she pressed it to the top of Wong's hand. She watched his wound slowly heal. Unfortunately,
she wasn't quite strong enough to heal it all of the way yet but it looked a hell of a lot better. Wong looked at her with a mixture of shock and appreciation.

"Thank you." He mumbled softly.

"Anytime." She said, patting him reassuringly on the shoulder.

She wanted him to know that everything was going to be fine. If a bond did somehow form between her and Wong she knew that it was all familial and she now had another real big brother for keeps and she couldn't be happier about it. She saw that Wong's hand was still swelling pretty badly still and could really used an ice pack. She frowned. He was just kind of sitting there looking at his damaged hand.

"Wong." She called softly and gave him a small nudge so he would look at her. "I am going to find you an ice pack."

Wong gave her a look of understanding and nodded.

"Okay sure." He replied.

As she got up, she gave him another reassuring pat on the shoulder.

"Don't worry so much, Stephen won't kill you I promise." She reassured.

Wong nodded and smiled back at her. She could sense that he was feeling a little less freaked out now thankfully. Now that she knew that Wong would be fine, she left the 'practice room' and went to search out an ice pack.

Stephen

Stephen snarled obscenities under his breath. While he was happy that he was indeed able to help that little girl, he felt no thanks to her stupid mother that he thought that he would never feel clean again. It turned out that she DID end up having a small dream parasite attached to her. He easily entered her mind and dispatched it for her. It was relatively easy procedure that required him to enter the little girl's mind and search it out. There was rarely ever any rhyme or reason to how dream parasites ended up where they did, they just did. They fed off of and manipulated people's dreams and did not much else. Still he couldn't have them running amok of people's dreams like that especially the dreams of little girls. The problem had been trying to leave after he finished to procedure, the mother refused to let him leave! She was all over him and he had to pry her off of him so he could get the hell out of there! He felt so bad for that little girl that he slipped her his number before he got out of there. If she ever needed help again she could call him. He knew that Irena wouldn't mind.

Thinking of Irena caused him to calm down immensely. He felt that he had been away from her long enough and couldn't wait to get back to her. He was already thinking of all the things that he wanted to do to and with her. Thinking of what happened this morning in the shower, a spark of arousal shot through him and he hoped that she was ready for him when he got back. Reaching the Sanctum, he fell softly to the ground and wasted no time in entering the front door, immediately he could sense that something was off. He searched out Irena through the bond and determined that she was in the 'practice room'. He wasted no time in going there; he HAD to make sure that she was okay. He forgot all about his arousal and about that girl's stupid mother violating his person. His only concern was for Irena for the moment. He entered the practice room and was shocked at the scene in front of him. All of her tools were scattered all over the wooden table and the floor. He saw that she and Wong were sitting at the table looking all dishevelled. Wong looked like he got it worse than Irena.
He looked terrible. Like was about to vomit or something. Irena was holding an ice pack to Wong's hand and he could sense that she was hurt. The bond flared to life but he forced himself to tamp it down because it would do him no good to 'hulk out' as Stark so eloquently put it right now even though he wanted to really badly. He sensed that Irena was magically drained, in pain and exhausted both mentally and physically. Oh his poor little love. What on god's green earth happened while he was away?

Irena

As soon as she could sense Stephen entering the Sanctum, she was both relieved and completely petrified at the same time. She could sense his emotions through the bond and his only concern was for her at the moment. She watched him enter the room and take in the scene in front of him. She could feel and concern but she could also feel his anger begin to bleed through too. It was clear that he didn't like what he saw. She also knew that he could sense that she was magically wasted and completely exhausted. He wasted no time in coming to check her over.

"I know you are hurt, sweetheart. Don't try to hide it form me or I will find it myself." He warned.

She inwardly winced. She knew that he would and Wong didn't need to see any of that right now.

"I got pushed on my ass accidently by Wong when he tried to rescue me." She explained softly.

She sensed that he honestly didn't know how to process that. He looked at her with a looked that clearly said 'elaborate right now, please'.

She sighed, this was going to suck. She only hoped that she could stop him from losing it too badly.

"Look you can't freak out about this. Not long after Toby and I broke up, Sam Wilson became interested in me. I told him that it wouldn't work because I had just broken up with Toby and just no. I wasn't ready for anything like that at all. Unfortunately it was difficult for him to understand that and our relationship just sort of deteriorated hence why he wasn't at my birthday party. Anyway, yesterday I got a text form him and just completely ignored it thinking nothing of it and then today he shows up here for me to fix his wings. He asked me about you and asked me why he couldn't get a chance. I tried to explain to him why there was no chance with him and needless to say it did not go well." She started.

She could sense Stephen's emotions and it was not pretty. Immediately, she got up and placed herself in his lap. She stroked his chest and she could sense him calming down some.

"Stephen relax, I'm okay. Wong (she turned to Wong and gave him a grateful look as she explained this part) came in and rescued me. Something weird happened though, Sam seemed to be influenced by my magic or something I'm not sure and something weird happened to Wong too. I had to separate them with my magic. I don't even know what happened to me it was like I lost control but I didn't. I somehow managed to use a spell I've never used before on the first time. I don't even know what happened to me but I managed to somehow stop them. Anyway, Sam left and I managed to heal Wong's hand a little bit because he got a really bad fight-bite from the fight. After that you came in and here we are." She finished.

Stephen looked at her like he didn't even know what to say but she could sense that his anger had dissipate slightly. Gently, he nudged her off of his lap and went around to where Wong was situated. He placed a reassuring hand on Wong's shoulder. He still looked a little green around the gills. She watched Stephen try to reassure him.

"It's okay Wong, we'll figure out what happened to you don't worry. In the meantime finish healing
that hand of yours and go have a rest.” He reassured him.

Wong looked at both her and Stephen gratefully.

"Thank you Stephen and thank you, little sister." He said.

Now that he seemed to be a little better, Wong got up from the chair he was occupying and went to go look after his hand. Stephen turned his attention back to her. He gave her a look that made her swallow hard not in a bad way. It was quite the opposite.

"Come with me." He ordered softly.

When he talked to her like that, she had no choice but to comply. He placed a large warm hand on her back and she let him lead her from the room. She supposed that she would have to pick up her tools later. He let her straight to his bedroom not stopping once along the way except to disengage from the cloak. She knew as well as he did that if he didn't disengage from the cloak before he entered the bedroom it would become nothing but a giant cockblock. He gently nudged her into the room. Immediately, she went and collapsed into the bed and let out a long groan.

"Why is always me all of the time?" She griped.

Stephen merely chuckled and pulled her back into a standing position gently of course. He shifted them so he was sitting on the bed and she was standing in front of him. She looked at him curiously wondering just what he was doing. He seemed to sense this.

"We will discuss what happened with your magic tomorrow. Right now I wish to see your injury." He explained.

"Stephen." She squeaked out turning red up to her hairline. "I'm fine I just fell on my ass that's all."

It wasn't good enough for him.

"I want to see it." He repeated this time a little more forcefully.

She supressed a shudder at how deep his voice was, it caused her core to heat up a little bit. She knew that he could sense it. She almost wanted to defy him and see what would happen. He seemed to bring out sides of her that she didn't even know existed. Before she could even respond to him, he whirled her around so that she was facing away from him. She felt his arm snake around her and find the button to her jeans. Despite the fact that his hand was shaking slightly, he easily undid the button and zipper to her jeans. Without warning, he practically yanked them down her legs and she let out a shocked squeak. He bent her forward slightly so he could examine what was probably a giant bruise that covered half her ass cheek that looked worse than it was. She tended to bruise easily. He poked and prodded the area and let out a pained noise when hit a particularly sensitive spot. He hissed angrily.

"I should go and punish that boy for this." He hissed.

Her mismatched eyes grew large at his words.

"Stephen no!" She exclaimed.

He chuckled at her exclamation. He stroked her bruised ass cheek thoughtfully.

"Alright, you win this time my little love. Besides, I have more important things to do right now anyway." He conceded.
Gently, he continued with his ministrations. Suddenly, she felt something else besides his fingers there. Was that... was he placing a kiss on her bruised ass cheek? She was shocked to feel that she liked it. As he moved to kiss other places on her she could feel his beard scraping against her skin. She was shocked at the strength of the sparks of arousal that she felt at the sensation. Feeling her arousal caused him to let out a deep growl. Without warning, he whirled her back around so that she was facing him. He started placing warm kisses just below her belly button. His hands stroked and caressed her hips. Again, she felt his beard scraping against her sensitive skin as he moved to place kisses in other areas. Automatically, her small hands wound themselves into his dark tresses hoping to keep him place so he couldn't stop his ministrations. She ran her hands through his hair as he continued place small warm kisses on all the skin he could find. Whenever he hit a particularly sensitive spot, she would tug on his hair a little and she could sense that he liked it. Suddenly, he spoke and his voice was husky with arousal.

"You think such dirty thoughts, my naughty little minx. But you are still too innocent to ask for such things." He purred huskily.

She turned red with embarrassment that he was reading her thoughts. She had no idea where they were coming from. He chuckled at her embarrassment.

"Sweet little kitten, there is no need to be embarrassed. Do you trust me?" He asked already knowing the answer.

"Yes." She said embarrassed at how needy she sounded.

"Good girl." He growled deeply against her stomach.
To Have Dinner with the Parents

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hello everybody enjoying this story! Here is another chapter good to go! I hope you all in enjoy this one and thank you again for the kudos they mean the world to me! :) 

Irena

Irena let out a contented sigh. Stephen was sleeping all curled around her protectively. She felt completely warm and sated in ways that she had never experienced before. She enjoyed it very much. She couldn't help but let her mind wander to the previous night. She honestly had no idea where any of that even came from. She couldn't believe the way she reacted to Stephen's deep voice ordering her to do such naughty things. Not that his deep voice didn't normally drive her crazy but this was on a whole different level. This was something she wanted to experience again and again. She had no idea that any of that stuff could be like THAT. Then again, Toby had completely skewed all of her views on that stuff and she completely closed herself off from pretty much all of it until she met Stephen. He completely changed her views on all of it and now she was becoming the insatiable one. Part of her wanted to be really naughty and wake him to explore this newfound thing that she enjoyed so much all over again but she refrained from doing so. While she knew that he would have no problem with that at all, he was sleeping so soundly and looking so content that she just opted to let him sleep instead.

She shifted slightly to get a little more comfortable and Stephen's arms unconsciously tightened around her. Her mismatched eyes softened at this. Even in his sleep he still sought her out. It made her feel so loved. She snuggled deeper into his chest and let out a happy noise. She began to relax and slipped somewhere between sleep and awake. She stayed this way for quite some time before another less...enjoyable thought popped into her mind. What in the holy hell was going on with her magic? When she summoned that spell whatever it was, it honestly felt as she was losing control of her magic but she hadn't lost control she knew that much. She knew that she consciously summoned and dismissed that spell. Perhaps it was a defence mechanism or she just simply concentrated too hard when she tried to summon spells on command. She did not know. She also noticed she still seemed to fatigue easily when she exerted a large amount of magic. This was something that she would have to talk to Stephen about at some point today.

As she continued to think about magic in general, her mind shifted to the behavior of Sam and Wong yesterday. That was also bugging the crap out of her. She couldn't help but think that she was partially responsible for what happened to both of them. With Wong it was different; she mostly knew what it was. He was showing all the signs of some kind of bond forming. What it was, she didn't know but it did feel familial of that much she was certain. She and Stephen would have to check out that book of different types of bonds to find out. Whatever it was, she knew that it wasn't bad though. Sam on the other hand, she was not so sure of. She knew that Sam was an intense person by nature but not like that. Even when he first entered the 'practice room', she felt that something was off. In learning all about magic and how it worked, she discovered that emotions seemed to affect magic and magic seemed to affect emotions. Could her magic or the magic of the sanctum have affected him in a negative why? As she thought more about it, she determined that it was probably her magic that did it. There was no way that the magic humming through the sanctum
was intense enough. Thinking that made her wonder if Sam didn't have some kind of 'allergy' to her magic. If that was the case, how shitty would that be? She didn't want Sam to hate her forever or never be able to come near her. This was something else that she would have to ask Stephen about.

She let out a soft sigh.

'Why is it when somebody has feelings for me that go beyond friendship everything goes all to hell all of the time?' She wondered to herself.

Knowing that her emotions were starting to drift to a place that she didn't like, she tried to sort them out before Stephen felt them through the bond and woke up. Feeling him shift behind her slightly, she knew she failed in that endeavor. He tried to cuddle her even closer to himself and she felt him place a tender kiss on the sensitive spot just behind her ear.

"You are thinking bad thoughts again." He murmured into her neck.

She inwardly winced and started chewing at her lips a little bit. She knew that she had no choice but to tell him the truth.

"Yes." She admitted.

She heard him let out a soft sigh from behind her. She knew that he wasn't upset with her in any way but didn't like it when her thoughts were like that.

"Would it help to talk about it?" He asked softly.

She paused for a moment and tried to figure out how to word what she wanted to say.

"I feel like my powers are wrecking everything. I somehow made Sam hate me and I don't even know what happened with Wong but I think that happened because of me too. I don't want Sam to hate me forever because of my powers. It's like anybody who happens to like me more than a friend is destined to hate my ass forever with the exception of you of course. Like what in the hell is wrong with me?" She griped, burying her face into her pillow.

Stephen let out a deep chuckle from behind her and she could feel it vibrating through her. She enjoyed the sensation. She could sense that he was amused because of course he was and she could also sense a little bit of possessiveness bleeding through too, possibly because she mentioned Sam. Gently, he shifted her so she was facing him. He was looking at her with such love and tenderness that it made her insides melt a little bit.

"Sweetheart, there is nothing wrong with you. Your powers make you so very special and don't you ever forget that. If it will help, I will help you to find out why your powers are doing such things. It could be just a defence mechanism or something of the like. As for Wong, don't worry about him, you know he'll be fine. If a bond did indeed form that's not a bad thing is it?" He reassured, stroking her messy hair out of her face.

At his touch, she calmed immensely. His touch always made her feel better. She let out a happy little noise. Cupping the sides of his face with her small hands, she guided her lips to his and gave him a soft kiss full of love.

"Thank you." She murmured against his lips.

He let out his own noise of content and tried to pull her closer to himself. She helped him the best she could. She so enjoyed being skin on skin with him.
"You're welcome." He murmured back.

He began to touch and stroke her in places that set her body on fire. The shit-eating smirk on his face told her that he knew exactly what he was doing to her and she could sense that he enjoyed it immensely. Her thoughts once again drifted in a less than virtuous direction and that caused him to let out a low growl.

"Who's the insatiable one now?" He purred cheekily.

"And whose fault is that?" She countered playfully.

He let out a warm laugh and continued his ministrations in earnest now. Just as she started to loose herself in the sensations he created, the song 'Mother, Mother' by The Veronicas started blaring from her phone sitting on the bedside table. That was Pepper's ring tone and she knew that trying to ignore Pepper was almost as useless as trying to ignore Tony. She knew if she tried to ignore the call, Pepper would just keep on calling over and over until she picked up the damn thing. Turning in Stephen's embrace, she tried to grope for the phone. She could sense his discontent at the whole situation.

"Just leave it." He growled petulantly.

She fought the urge to roll her eyes.

"Stephen, that's Pepper's ring tone and I can't just ignore her! Tony could have blown himself up again for all I know." She exclaimed.

Once when she was hanging out with Darcy a while back, Tony literally blew himself up with an experiment gone wrong. She actually had to bail on Darcy whom she was already with her to go help Pepper deal with Tony thankfully he wasn't hurt too badly, just mostly his pride. She was pissed at him for days after he did that.

"I don't like it any more than you do." She added.

She managed to snatch her cell phone off the bedside table while staying securely wrapped up in Stephen's arms. She opened it up and pressed the accept call button.

"Pepper, is Tony okay? What happened?" She asked worriedly.

She heard Pepper's laugh filtering through the phone.

"Irena, relax. I promise you Tony is fine. I was just calling to see how things were going. Plus, I have a proposition for you and Stephen if you're interested." Pepper explained.

She felt immense relief knowing Tony was okay. Just because he was a giant pain in her ass didn't mean that she didn't care about him or didn't love him. He was her 'father' after all. Her curiosity became extremely piqued at the words 'I have a proposition'. She wondered was Pepper had planned.

"Proposition?" She asked curiously.

"Yeah, I was wondering if you and Stephen wanted to come over and have dinner with Tony and me later this evening?" Pepper asked her.

She could practically sense Pepper's excitement through the phone and that caused her to smile softly.
"Sure Pepper that sounds excellent! What time would you like us over?" She replied happily.

At the words ‘what time would you like us over’, she felt Stephen's curiosity increase greatly over the bond. She knew that he was listening intently now.

"How about around 7? You and I both know what Tony is like. He'll want to turn this into a huge extravagant get together." Pepper laughed.

She couldn't help but laugh along with Pepper. She hit the nail right on the proverbial head with that one. With Tony it was always go big or go home. She certainly hoped he wouldn't go too overboard. Despite living with Tony and Pepper for so long, she tended to like things simple and she knew simple would make Stephen more comfortable too. She could sense that Stephen was working out what she and Pepper were discussing. Suddenly, he sort of stiffened behind her and his emotions began shifting rapidly. Her eyebrows knitted together in confusion, just what in the hell was going on with him?

"Oh I know he will he is such a pain in the ass! 7 sounds fine to me!" She agreed.

Pepper's laughter increased exponentially at her calling a Tony a giant pain in the ass. Well, she was only speaking the truth. Tony was in fact a giant pain in the ass but she loved him anyway and she knew that despite the fact that he was emotionally stunted most of the time, he loved her too. She and Pepper finished hashing out the details of the dinner and then she bid Pepper goodbye with the promise of calling more often. After she finished up talking with Pepper, she placed her phone back onto the little night table next to the bed and turned to face Stephen to see exactly what the issue was.

She was shocked to see that he looked green like he was going to be sick. She didn't know whether to try and get him a trash can to be sick in or to just try and haul him to the bathroom. She honestly had never seen him looking so green before. Had he really never had a dinner with the parent's thing with Christine before?

Crap, he literally looked like he was about to blow chunks. Immediately, she shifted so that she was sort of straddling him. She placed her small hands on either side of his face to get him to concentrate on her.

"Stephen, what in the hell is going on with you? Have you never done a dinner with the parent's thing before with Christine?" She asked, worry lacing her tone.

He looked at her like he was trying figure out the right thing to say.

"Yes sweetheart, I have done a 'dinner with the parent's thing' as you put it with Christine but back then I thought differently about it. I am going to sound like a royal prick here but I didn't care about it back then in the way I do now. I was too invested in my career and my head was too far up my ass to care about it." He explained.

She started understanding what the problem was. He was scared that for one reason that something he or she said would make Tony and Pepper want to make him stop seeing her or something of the like. Not that they could make her stop seeing him but she understood where he was coming from and the mess it would make if something like that DID happened. Even though she knew that he had nothing to worry about, she tried to comfort him anyway that she could.

"Shh Stephen, you have nothing to worry about nothing bad will happen." She reassured, stroking the sides of his face softly.

She could sense through the bond that he was beginning to calm down a little bit thankfully. He was looking at her tenderly.
"Thank you for that my little love. I know I have nothing to worry about but you are my everything and I can't help it." He murmured, giving her a soft kiss.

"Anytime." She murmured, deepening the kiss.

When oxygen became a necessity, she pulled back slightly and gave him a cheeky grin.

"And yes, you did sound like a royal prick back then." She added cheekily.

Giving her an exasperated look, he rolled his eyes and then tried pull her even closer to himself.

"You want to be like that do you? Come here you, I want to teach you a lesson!" He growled playfully.

She couldn't help the high pitched giggle that pealed out of her mouth.

Some Time Later

Irena

Irena walked with Stephen to the 'practice room' and couldn't seem to wipe the dopey smile from her face. Stephen knew that he was the cause of said dopey smile and she could sense that he was preening about it because of course he was. She fought the urge to shake her head in exasperation. What a piece of work he was. After they finally started getting ready for the day and ate some sort of breakfast, she asked him if she could practice her magic today to which he readily agreed. He understood that she wanted to work on getting fatigued less quickly as she casted spells. She also wanted to determine what in the hell that spell that she summoned was. There was something else that was sort of irking her too. When she and Stephen tried to leave his bedroom, the cloak and Sapphire assaulted them as usual but the cloak was acting weird. It seemed to be glued to her abdomen for some reason shooing everybody way who tried to go near it. Finally, she and Stephen managed to pry it off of her. Whatever it was, it was weird but she let it go for now because she had other things to deal with.

She and Stephen entered the 'practice room' and she began to go through the routine of spells that she usually casted for him while he watched her intently. Occasionally, he would point out something that would make it easier to cast a spell or if something in her form needed work. She was surprised that her energy seemed to be holding up pretty well. She felt a little different but thought nothing of it. She decided that she was warmed up enough to try that mystery spell.

"Alright, I want to cast whatever it was that I used yesterday." She said.

He nodded at her.

"Sure, just be aware of your energy levels though." He advised.

She nodded and she began to try casting that spell. She found that her magic was being very stubborn. She pictured exactly what she wanted to cast but nothing happened. She began to get frustrated and started jumping out and down in an attempt to relieve her frustration a little bit. She almost wanted to flip the wooden table that sat in the corner like Thor did to Tony's coffee table when he lost at a video game. Watching her little display, Stephen gave her an amused grin.

"Relax sweetheart, you'll get it work eventually." He laughed.

She gave him a look.
"That's easy for you to say you're good at this stuff already!" She griped.

He gave her a soft look in return.

"I know I am but it took a lot of practice and a lot of failing for me to get here. Eventually, you'll get as good as me if not better you just need to let your frustration go." He soothed, stroking the side of her face.

She instantly calmed at the touch.

"I know, it's just annoying I used it so easily yesterday." She pouted.

"Yes I know but yesterday your magic was defending you. Today you are trying to do it on command it's different. Here, can you describe what the spell looked like to me?" He asked her.

She thought for a moment and then nodded.

"Sure, it sort of looked like 'the crimson bands of Cyttorak' but different. They were blue of course, they glowed and they looked like actual whips it was weird." She described.

She could sense that he was really interested in the spell.

"Hmmm, that's very interesting. Let me do a little research and see what I can find. I want to go and talk to Wong anyway. I can sense that you are getting hungry again. Why don't you go and start getting ready for dinner? I will be up shortly." He suggested.

Even though she agreed with his idea, she was feeling a little moody and stubborn. She didn't want to leave him just yet. He could sense this and gave her an affectionate look.

"Oh sweetheart, I promise I won't be long I just want you to get a head start." He said, stroking his hand through her crazy hair.

She made a face but conceded defeat.

"Oh alright fine, I'll go." She whined.

"Good girl." He murmured, giving her soft kiss on the temple.

He gave her a gentle swat on the ass to get her moving and it caused her to stick her tongue out at him but she finally started moving. Leaving the 'practice room', she made her way back to Stephen's bedroom slowly. She hated getting gussied up and she was so not looking forward to having to do it. She was not a dress and make up person by any stretch of the imagination but she did know the basics no thanks to Darcy forcing her to learn them. Just before she got to entered Stephen's room, she was again assaulted by the cloak and Sapphire. Even Sapphire was starting to act a little weird.

'What in the hell is going on around here?' She wondered to herself.

After a little bit of effort, she managed to detach herself from the cloak and Sapphire. She entered Stephen's room and shut the door behind her. With those two running amok around the room she would never be able to get ready on time. She sighed and approached Stephen's wardrobe. She started shifting through the clothes in there until she came across a cute little black dress that she had stashed behind a bunch of other clothes. She shuddered. Ugh how she hated dresses. She continued to examine the dress and decided that it wasn't THAT bad and it would have to do for tonight. She picked it up when she was on a shopping spree with Darcy back when she was still kind of an asshole and going through Charlie's death. She kind of swiped one of Tony's credit cards and went a
little nuts. Thankfully, he didn't mind so much probably because it was helping her to deal with Charlie's death to some degree. Looking through the wardrobe, she managed to come up victorious with the shoes that went with the dress.

After she got that all sorted out, she went and hopped into the shower so she could clean herself up a little bit. Finishing quickly, she hopped out and grabbed a towel to dry herself off with. After wrapping the towel around herself securely, she got to work on taming her head of massive curls. It took a hell of a long time but she managed to get them looking a lot less frizzy which made her very happy. She pinned up her hair to make sure that she didn't undo all of the hard work that she just did. She also decided to suck it up and put on a bit of makeup. Just enough to make her features pop just like Darcy taught her. After she finished, she exited the bathroom and went to pick out some proper underwear to go with the little black dress. While she wasn't a size 0 by any means, she didn't consider herself fat either but she had enough curves that when she wore something that slinky she needed the proper underwear to keep everything where it was supposed to be. After locating what she was looking for, she dropped her towel and changed into them quickly. Just as she finished, Stephen walked into the bedroom and she could feel him staring at her. She turned around and gave him a cheeky look.

"See something you like?" She asked cheekily.

He looked at her intently and his eyes were dark with desire.

"Oh god yes." He purred.

So apparently he liked black, lacy things. She would have to file that bit of information away for later. She approached him seductively. She stood on her tippy toes and placed her lips next to his ear as if to whisper something.

"Well tough titties, you have to get in the shower mister." She whispered, licking the shell of his ear as she pulled away.

He looked at her completely stunned for a moment. Until she gave him a good swat to the ass to get him moving, then he looked at her with complete shock. It took him a moment to find his words again.

"Why you cheeky little minx! You'll pay for that later!" He said with a look in his eyes that she really liked.

"Oh I look forward to it." She giggled.

He gave her a searing look but complied with her wishes and went to go in the shower. While he did this, she finished getting herself all ready. She slipped her dress on and put her shoes on with some effort. She let down her hair and smoothed her dress out. She was pretty impressed with herself. For once in her she actually felt put together and she liked it. She waited patiently for Stephen to finish showering. A few minutes passed and the shower finally turned off. She watched him exit the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist. She saw that he had combed his hair in place and did away with the five o'clock shadow. He looked as handsome as ever. He approached the wardrobe without taking his eyes off of her. Momentarily, his eyes left hers as he pulled out his chosen clothes for the evening and then they were right back on her. Watching her, daring her not to look away while he changed and she took on that dare without any hesitation. She took in every inch of him wishing sorely that she didn't have to go have to dinner with Tony and Pepper like the terrible person that she was.

'Oh god, why can't we just stay here and…STOP IT! You can't do that to Tony and Pepper. Plus
He finished changing and gave her a look that indicated that she was in for it when they got back. Clearly he had read her thoughts. She couldn't wait to find out what he was going to do with her when they got back. As for right now, she let him place his big, warm hand on her lower back and led her out of the bedroom. As they left, He placed his lips near her ear.

"You look beautiful." He murmured, pressing a kiss to her temple.

"You don't look too bad yourself, handsome." She murmured back, placing a soft kiss onto his jaw. Together, they made their way to the foyer of the sanctum so Stephen could open up a portal to Tony's and Pepper's apartment. She and Pepper decided it would be nice just to eat on Tony's balcony. Tony didn't mind cooking once and a while and it was a whole lot better than having to go to restaurant. It was a whole lot less stressful on everybody anyway. She watched Stephen effortlessly preform the movements to open a portal. They both stepped into it and popped out in Tony's and Pepper's living room on the other side. Of course like always, she almost ended up on her ass but Stephen caught her before she hit the floor. After Stephen righted her, she gave both Tony and Pepper a big hug. She missed them a lot. Pepper gave Stephen a hug while Tony gave him a friendly slap on the shoulder and handed him a beer. She couldn't help but laugh at the look on poor Stephen's face. While she went into the kitchen and retrieved herself a Ginger ale, everybody else made themselves comfortable the couch to talk while the food cooked. She came back into the living room and situated herself next to Stephen on the couch. Tony and Pepper sat across from her and Stephen. They talked about all kinds of stuff and it was great until Tony mentioned her powers.

"So kiddo, are you going to finally tell me what the magic explosion thingy was all about when we were fighting those monsters?" He asked curiously.

She paused for a moment trying to figure out just how she was going to properly word a response to that question. Stephen gave her a reassuring look and stroked her arm with his thumb.

"Um well, I'm actually only sort of human. Apparently, I'm something called 'The descendant of the Guardians' and that makes my magic like that among other things. It's all very complicated and Stephen and I are trying to find out more about it." She tried to explain.

Tony tried to give her a reassuring look he could muster and gave her a pat on the knee. She almost laughed out loud at the look Pepper gave him and his lame-ass attempt to comfort her. Lame-ass attempt or not, he was her 'father' he always did his best to heal her hurts, get rid of her bullies and look after the best he could regardless of the fact that he had the emotional capacity of a tea spoon ninety percent of the time. Thankfully, he always had Pepper there to bail him out when the going got tough.

"It's okay kid, you got me, Pepper and Merlin to help you through this so don't worry." He said trying to comfort her.

She had to hold back a snort of laughter. Even when he was trying to be sincere, he called Stephen Merlin. She could see that Stephen was tried to keep the annoyed look off of his face due to the seriousness of the conversation but was failing miserably. Thankfully the conversation went back to normal after that at least until Tony's dark eyes landed on the can of Ginger ale that she was currently taking a swing from. She gave him a look as if to say 'what are you looking at?'

"Say kiddo, what's with the Ginger ale? Normally you have beer, you aren't pregnant are you? I'm too young to be a grandpa." He joked.
At Tony's joke, she began to choke on the swig of Ginger ale that she took. Stephen patted her back in an effort to help her clear her air way. Before she had the chance to yell at Tony for saying such a thing, Pepper beat her to it.

"What the hell Tony! Did you actually think that was funny? What in the hell is wrong with you?" Pepper exclaimed.

She could sense that Pepper wasn't really mad at him nor was she but she could believe he even said something like to begin with. Then again, he was Tony.

"What, it was supposed to be a joke!" Tony defended himself.

After getting a stern warning from Pepper, Tony promised not to make any more bad jokes and the conversation finally did go back to normal. It took no time at all for dinner to be ready and for everybody to dig in. It was steak and fries or a baked potato. Steak really wasn't her favorite but it made Tony happy so she dug in the best that she could. Since she was 10 years old and left the orphanage, Tony tried to get her to eat fancy and she hated it. She always got chicken fingers and fries even at the fanciest restaurants he took her to. It drove him bananas but she thought it was pretty damn hilarious. She was really grateful that he included fries in tonight's dinner. Even though he would never ever say it out loud, she knew that he did it for her. In return for that, she ate her steak without complaint. For desert, Pepper pulled out a chocolate cheese cake that looked to die for. She used every ounce of will power she had not to consume more than one piece. After desert was done, she and Stephen helped clear and wash all of the dishes. It wasn't long after that that she began to fidget restlessly. She knew that it was time to go and Stephen could sense it too. She and Stephen bid Tony and Pepper goodnight with the promise to have another 'dinner with the parents' really soon. Stephen opened a portal and popped back into the sanctum on the other side.

As soon they entered the sanctum and the portal closed, Stephen captured her lips with his in a searing kiss. He wasted no time in hiking up her dress so she could wrap her legs around his waist. Without breaking the kiss, he carried her to the bedroom in several large strides shooing the cloak and Sapphire away as he did so. Entering the bedroom, he slammed the door behind them closed. Momentarily, she broke kiss and disengaged from his waist to kick off her shoes. She wasted no time in re-wrapping her legs and kissing him hard. She could sense his desire and it only served to heighten her own. Instead of bringing her to the bed, he slammed her into the bedroom door, causing a startled gasp to fall from her lips and a growl to fall from his. She knew that she was in for a rough night tonight and couldn't be more excited about it.

A Few Hours Later

Stephen

Suddenly, Stephen was startling awake when he felt something vibrating against him. Waking up a little more he realized that it was Irena shivering against him. Looking down, he realized that she was lying on the bed uncovered and so was he. He remembered their activities a few hours earlier and he grinned boyishly. He had never had it quite so intense before before but he enjoyed every minute of it. He would never get over how Irena reacted to him and his voice when he told her to do such naughty things. He decided that he would have to have her like that each time from here on out. Looking down at Irena tenderly, he covered her up and slid out of her embrace so he could go and relieve himself quickly. Coming out of the bathroom, he was momentarily struck how she looked all wrapped in his sheets with the most wild sex hair that he's ever seen. He could see the Dragon's Tear glowing softly around her neck. She looked beautiful to him, even just like that.

Suddenly an errant thought popped into his mind. He thought about the joke that Tony made earlier about her being pregnant because she was drinking ginger ale. He momentarily entertained the idea
of her becoming pregnant with his child and pondered what that would be like for a good few minutes. Back when he was with Christine and still a doctor, he was so concerned about his career that the idea of being stuck raising a child horrified him. Plus because he was in fact a giant royal prick back then he thought children to be disgusting nuisance little creatures.

Now, the thought of Irena walking around the sanctum with her belly swollen with his child caused an indescribable emotion to surge through him.

As he sat and pondered whether or not he liked the idea of Irena having a little being inside of her that was part her and part him the answer was…undoubtedly.
Irena

Over the next few days, Irena continued to practice her magic. Currently, she was in the 'practice room' dressed in her work out clothes doing just that. Not only improve how easily she got fatigued but to try and summon that damn spell. She still couldn't seem to do it. It seemed that her magic really DID have a mind of its own and it was annoying as all hell. Maybe Stephen was right maybe it was some kind of defence mechanism. Either way, it was a giant pain in her ass. What happened if her magic malfunctioned on her when she was in the middle of a fight or some crap like that? Somehow, she had a feeling deep down that something like that would never happen but it still worried her. She continued to practice a bit more before she began to feel hunger and fatigue start to kick in and she knew that it was time to take a break. She exited the 'practice room' and went to go to the kitchen to go and prepare some lunch for her, Stephen and Wong. Stephen and Wong were currently doing something in the library. Stephen was probably trying to help Wong figure out what happened to him the other day or Wong was trying to help him find out more about the spell she used. Either way, she knew that they would want to eat at some point.

Opening the fridge, she sifted through its contents trying to figure out what she wanted to make for lunch. She wrinkled her nose. There wasn't much to choose from except a butt-load of leftovers. She decided that she would have to go pick up some groceries at some point because they couldn't keep on living on leftovers. Grabbing some of the left overs from the fridge, she decided that she would just throw them together in some kind of hodge-podge lunch. Luckily, Stephen and Wong weren't picky. As she began to put together her hodge-podge lunch, the cloak suddenly levitated into the kitchen. She watched curiously as it approached her and wrapped around her mid-section. It started rubbing against her abdomen and she looked at it with confusion.

"What in the blue hell are you doing?" She wondered to herself.

She decided to voice her thought out loud.

"What is up with you?" She asked the cloak.

It merely gave her abdomen a gentle squeeze and continued the rubbing like some giant, overgrown crimson housecat. She didn't mind it but it was just weird. It never paid that much attention to one single area of her body so much before. She pondered this for a moment and then Sapphire came into the room. Sapphire looked up at her with her big yellow eyes and she could sense that she was extremely happy for some reason. Sapphire wasted no time in trying to crawl up her leg and snuggle up to her abdomen too. She even tried to stick her entire scaly little head underneath her shirt. This was something that the cloak really didn't like. She could feel the possessiveness just dripping from it; she had never felt such possessiveness coming from it before. It tried desperately to shoo Sapphire away but Sapphire was having none of it and growled right back at it. She had no idea what to even do with this situation. She sat there for a moment trying to decipher said situation until she thought of
something. OH LORD HAVE MERCY NO. She couldn't actually BE pregnant could she?

For as long as she could remember, since like 8th or 9th grade at least when she first started having a period she had been on the birth control pill. Her periods had been so crappy and that had been the only thing to make any sort of difference. She knew that pill was an extremely effective birth control and as far as she knew she didn't miss any pills so to think that she still managed to get pregnant somehow was just stupid wasn't it? As she was contemplating that, she couldn't help something else from popping into her head. When she got her period for the first time it was she was in the middle of her school day, not knowing what else to do she called Tony to come and rescue her and she thought she had literally broken his mind when she explained to him what was happening to her. Needless to say, Pepper had been the one to rescue her that day. For the rest of her natural life, she would remember his reaction. It had been painfully clear he had been trying to ignore that part about for as long as he could until he was forced to deal with it when it finally happened. She was sure there was more than one time that she did a number on him and accidentally scarred him for life. She let out a snort trying to cover her laughter at the memory. Oh, poor, poor Tony. He learnt what having a daughter was really all about that day. She tried her best to keep her mental blocks up considering Stephen liked to read her memories so often. She really didn't think that he or Wong wanted to know about that memory however hilarious it was. Shaking herself from the memory, she returned to trying to deal with the situation at hand. She tried everything to get Sapphire and the cloak off of her to no avail. Just as she began to get really frustrated, both Stephen and Wong appeared in the kitchen. Stephen looked completely amused and Wong was behind him covering his mouth in an attempt to muffle the snorts of laughter coming out of him. She looked completely annoyed.

"Oh screw the both of you." She grumbled.

Her saying that just caused them to laugh more and she rolled her mismatched eyes at them.

"What is going on here?" Stephen asked curiously.

"Hell if I know, I don't know what's gotten into them!" She exclaimed in exasperation.

With a little effort, Stephen managed pry both the cloak and Sapphire off of her. He gently shooed them away so she could finish making lunch in peace.

"Thank you!" She said, relief coloring her tone.

Stephen gave her a tender look and let out a warm chuckle.

He went and situated himself on one side of her and Wong situated himself on the other side of her. Both men began helping her prepare the rest of lunch. As they did this, she caught sight of Wong's hand and smiled.

"Wong, your hand is looking much better. Were you able to find out what happened to you when you rescued me the other day by the way?" She asked curiously.

At her question, Wong shifted a little bit and a he looked between her and Stephen like he was trying to figure out the right thing to say like he might cause Stephen to accidently 'hulk out' or something like that. Oh poor Wong. She gave him a reassuring look.

"Um well it looks like we may have formed some kind of familial bond. Are you okay with that?" He asked seriously.

She gave him a look like 'why wouldn't I be okay with that?'

"Wong, I assure you I am fine with that. Why wouldn't I be okay with getting a big brother for real?"
She laughed.

She could sense that Wong was relieved. She smiled at him and gave him a sisterly pat on the back.

"Thank you." He told her sincerely.

"Of course." She replied without hesitation.

She got back to work and they worked in a comfortable silence for a few minutes until she felt Stephen placing a warm kiss on her temple. She looked up at him and he was gazing at her lovingly.

"You are amazing." He murmured, running his nose along hers.

"Mmm, don't you know it." She giggled.

She laughed when Wong made gagging noises at their lovey-dovey display. Yep, things were back to normal again. It took them no time at all to finish preparing the hodge-podge leftovers lunch. They all sat at the tiny table at the end of the kitchen and enjoyed their meals. Halfway through consuming her meal, she began to feel fatigue and made a face. She supposed that she must have used more of her energy than she first thought. Stephen seemed to sense what was happening with her. He gave her a soft look.

"You are very tired my little love. Go and have a nap, Wong and I can handle the cleanup." He said, gently helping her to lie.

She wanted to protest but the look on his face told her that she had better not.

"Alright you win." She conceded.

"Good girl." He said happily.

After giving her one last tender kiss, he gently nudged her in the direction of the kitchen's exit and she got the hint. She left the kitchen and slowly made her way to Stephen's room. She wasted no time in ditching her socks and dropping her pants. She crawled into Stephen's bed and it took her no time at all to drift off to sleep.

**Dream/Memory**

5 year old Irena was fidgeted in her 'Mother's' lap. Her 'mother' was currently trying to tame her hair and make it somewhat workable because she refused to do it herself. She hated trying to brush it out herself. It hurt way too much. So unless her 'mother' tried to do SOMETHING about it, she would end up with it all shaved off at some point soon. She was threatened with that option more than once. She sensed that 'Mr. Mordo' would be returning soon and that caused her to fidget more. Whenever he went out, he always brought her something back and she knew that this time would be no different.

Suddenly, her 'mother' hit a particularly stubborn tangle and it caused her to let out a painful yelp.

"It would hurt less if you stopped your fidgeting." She admonished softly.

At being admonished by her 'mother' she became a little embarrassed and sheepish. She forced herself to sit straight and stop fidgeting. Her mother seemed to sense her embarrassment.

"Oh sweet child fret not, I am not angry with you." She said softly, stroking her messy curls.

She calmed considerably at hearing this. She smiled back softly at her 'mother' and remained sitting
still until the process was finished. Just as it was, 'Mr. Mordo' appeared in her in her doorway holding something in his right hand.

"Mr. Mordo!" She exclaimed happily.

A little clumsily, she scrambled off of her ‘mother's' lap and ran up to him. She looked at him expectantly and he let out a warm laugh. His warm brown eyes traveled to where her mother was still kneeling and he gave her a questioning look.

"Hmmm, how do I know you deserve this gift, little one? Has she been good, Ancient One?" He asked.

She sensed that he already knew the answer to his question.

"She has." Her ‘mother' confirmed.

He motioned for her to hold up her hands and he placed a small, stuffed black cat in the center of her palms. She loved it instantly. She told 'Mr. Mordo' so and gave him a huge hug. She decided that she would name the stuffed animal 'Dark'.

End Dream/Memory

Irena

Irena's mismatched eyes suddenly. Snapping into a sitting position quickly she tried to kick the covers off of herself because she felt so clammy and overheated. She started to cough uncontrollably trying to dislodge the phlegm that had become trapped in her throat. She couldn't believe the intensity of that memory. She tried to keep the sadness from washing over her and keep her emotions mostly stable. She didn't want Stephen to come running to her. She would tell him about the memory of course but she just needed time to process it first. She never could actually remember exactly where she had gotten 'Dark' in the first place and that explained it all. Crap, why was everything tied to that man? She turned to Stephen's desk where 'Dark' currently sat and felt tears prick at the corners of her eyes. She let out a soft sigh, and looked away from the small dark stuffed animal. She decided that she really needed to meditate it would help her to process what she was feeling better. After she had calmed down a bit, she crawled out of bed and re-dressed herself. Something else popped in her mind suddenly, she went into the bathroom and opened the medicine cabinet. She plucked out her little packet of birth control pills and counted how many she had left. She determined that she hadn't missed a single one and smiled to herself.

'There is no way in holy crap that I can be pregnant, then.' She thought with relief.

Putting the little packet of pills back where she got them, she exited the bathroom and then exited Stephen's room. She managed to get to Stephen's study before either the cloak or Sapphire could come and attack her which she was very thankful about. She loved both of them dearly but all she wanted to do right now was meditate. Entering Stephen's study, she hopped up onto his desk and tried to calm herself down enough to meditate. After a few minutes, she found herself relaxing and her eyes drifted closed. She didn't feel as relaxed as when Stephen was here with her talking to her but this would have to do. Halfway through her mediation, something suddenly changed. It was if she could feel something trying to call to her.

'Come and free me.' It called to her.

Suddenly, she went from seeing nothing in mind to being somehow dropped in the middle of Kamar-Taj. Whatever it was began to lead her through Kamar-Taj until she reached the library and was
standing in front of the big book that was glowing blue. It was still chained to the wall of course. Something was begging her to reach out and touch it. Unfortunately, the images disappeared before she could. She was coming out of her meditation. The deep, undoubtedly male voice spoke once more.

'Please come and free me Descendant of the Guardians, you are the only one who can do it.' It begged her.

Suddenly, her eyes snapped open and scrambled off of the desk as fast as she could almost falling off of it in the process. She had to get to Stephen as quickly as she could, whatever it was that was calling her to Kamar-Taj needed her help now. Exiting Stephen's study, she ran down the stairs to the library where she could sense that Stephen was and entered the library. She was that Wong and Stephen were going over some book that currently sat on the wooden table in front of them. Before she could even do anything, Stephen was up from the table and in front of her. He was looking at her with extreme worry. It was clear that he could sense her emotions. He placed his large hands on her shoulders and then ran them up and down her arms trying to calm her down some. It worked and she managed to calm down enough to tell both Stephen and Wong who had now approached her as well to see what the problem was.

"I need to get to Kamar-Taj now! There is something trapped in that chained up book and it is telling me to free it!" She tried to explain.

She watched both Stephen and Wong share a look. Did they seriously think she was making this stuff up!? She sincerely hoped not!

"Look, I went to meditate and whatever is trapped in that book came to me and asked me to free it! It said that I was the only one who could!" She elaborated.

She was looking deeply into Stephen's stormy blue eyes. She could sense that he was starting to understand her thankfully. She did know how she knew it, but she that whatever was trapped in that book was important and she needed to free it no matter what. He gave her a gentle look and then turned to Wong. She could sense that while Wong didn't think she was lying or anything of that nature but was just a little unsure of the situation. Because all of them knew that the saying 'no harm ever came from opening a book' was complete bullshit. She could sense that while Stephen believed her completely, he was a little unsure of the situation as well. She didn't blame them she just stormed into the library raving about some weird thing thing that was begging her to free it. It could be another demon trying to deceive her or something of the like. It could be anything really but somehow she knew that it was good and she needed to help it, she didn't know how to explain that to them though. She looked to Stephen, her mismatched eyes begging him.

"Please, Stephen." She begged.

Stephen continued to give her a gentle look. She sense that she managed to convince him how urgent the situation was, thank god for that.

"Wong, please open a portal to Kamar-Taj." He ordered softly.

Wong nodded and made the intricate hand movements necessary to open a portal. All three of them stepped into and came into Kamar-Taj on the other side. For once, she didn't almost fall on her ass when she exited the portal. She didn't even bother to look back at Stephen and Wong before she took off running down the hallway. She was on a mission to get to that book and nothing was going to stop her. Reaching the library quickly, she entered the large room and her mismatched eyes zeroed in on the glowing blue book chained to the wall. She reached out for the book and then hesitated for a moment. She had a feeling that when she touched this book, that it wasn't going to feel good but it
had to be done. Stephen and Wong caught up with her. They were both looking at her with extreme worry. She smiled back at them and then turned back to the book. She had to do this. She placed both hands on the book and was suddenly assaulted with images like she was the previous time she did this but this time was different. She could actually feel her magic melding with that of the book. The book's magic was so strong it was almost overwhelming to her. She held back a painful yell. She could sense that Stephen desperately wanted to help her but he was being held back Wong. Wong seemed to understand that however much it hurt and sucked that she had to do this and she had to do it alone. Magic suddenly exploded from the relic around her neck and she half transformed automatically. Now she could no longer hold back the painful yell that threatened to erupt from the back of her throat. The magic was so strong it threatened to tear her apart. Suddenly, she heard the deep voice in her mind.

"That's it! You've almost got it! Say the words and free me!" The voice commanded.

'Easy for you to say, asshole!' She thought with annoyance.

Whatever it was that she freeing from the book seemed to ignore the fact that she thought that and suddenly the words were there inside of her head. She didn't know how they got there just that she had to say them.

"Spirit of the Elder Guardians trapped in this book, I bind my magic to yours and release you!" She yelled loudly.

"Yes that's it!" The voice yelled.

As another pulse of magic suddenly ripped through her, the book ripped itself off the wall and the chains around it melted away. It was now floating in mid-air and then it turned itself so its spine was facing downward. It snapped open down the middle and silvery smoke started billowing out from the center of it. She was shocked to see the silvery smoke take the form of a man. The man was quite tall, dressed in tailored robes way more intricate than Stephen's and was looking at her with startling electric green eyes. His hair was some kind of silvery-white and tied back into a pony tail. Despite the fact that held an air of arrogance around him worse than Stephen, he was looking down at her quite gratefully. As he was staring down at her, everything started to return to normal. She lost her transformation and the relic returned to normal. She was all sweaty and panting heavily at the over-exertion she just went through and her legs were all wobbly. She hoped to never have to go through that again.

"Oh thank you, little girl! I thought I was going to be trapped in that book forever, Maximus at your service." He said, bowing deeply.

She didn't know whether or not to be offended at being called a little girl, shocked at what just happened to her or just collapse onto the floor into a pile of useless crap. Unfortunately, her body chose what to do for her. She tried to collapse onto the floor into a pile of useless crap but Stephen caught her before she hit the floor like a ton of bricks. He rocked her shaking from back and forth trying to sooth her. She was shocked that all of that magic that just went through her hadn't torn her apart.

She watched as Maximus looked her over and frowned.

"Oh dear, I didn't think it would take so much magic to free me, I am terribly sorry." He apologized. She could sense that Maximus was being sincere but she was annoyed as all hell. She wanted to know just what in the crap was happening and what he was! She was about to voice all of that and so was Stephen for that matter. Before either of them could, Maximus floated over to them and was
examining them closely. Both she and Stephen began to get uncomfortable at how close he was getting. She felt completely terrible for poor Wong who was stuck in the corner of the room witnessing all of this.

"What's this?" He murmured.

"You are no ordinary Descendant of the Guardians, little girl. I have not seen nor felt such a bond between two individuals in over 400 years!" He exclaimed.

His electric green eyes traveled down her abdomen and looked at it curiously.

"Well I'll be it seems to me that you are carrying a little surprise with you too." He chuckled.

It took her a full five minutes for what Maximus just told them to register in her head. She could feel that Stephen's emotions were all over the place too. Once what he said did register with her she didn't even know how to respond. She took her contraceptive like a good girl but somehow that didn't matter. Somehow she knew that Maximus was right. As if to prove he was right, she suddenly felt a small pulse of magic within her lower abdomen. She WAS pregnant!

As she continued to try and absorb the information, she didn't know whether to pass out or throw up or in what order even to do it in for that matter. She could only think one thing.

OH HOLY SWEET LORD ALMIGHTY!
To Be Overwhelmed

Chapter Notes

A/N: Here is another chapter just like I promised! Hopefully you all like it. Thank you all again for the kudos it means to world to me to get them!

Irena

As Irena continued to try and process what had just happened to her, she decided that she had enough of being on the cold floor and tried to get up. She was still a little wobbly from her ordeal so Stephen gently helped her up and led her to a chair. She slowly slid down onto the chair and Stephen stood behind her so he could caress the top of her head which helped her greatly. His ministrations caused her to let out a soft sigh of contentment and to lean back so her head was resting against his stomach. After she felt herself calm a little more, she turned her attention to Maximus. As much as she was still trying to process the fact that she was pregnant, she also wanted to know what in the hell he was and how in the hell he got trapped in that book in the first place.

"Say Maximus, what exactly are you and how did even get trapped in that book in the first place." She asked curiously.

Maximus raised a silvery brow at her choice of words, slightly affronted at being asked 'what he was' but he did answer her question.

"I was once and still am an Elder Guardian; there were five others like me. After dark magic was created and locked away, it was decided that one of us would say behind long after our race became extinct to guide the descendant of our people when the time came. Being the 'Descendant of the Guardians' is no easy task, little girl. You are going to need all the help you can get." He explained.

She frowned at being called 'little girl' in such a condescending way. Did he not think that she was capable of being the 'descendant of the guardians' or did he think that she was going to do a shitty job? From what she gathered so far, there had been other 'Descendant of the Guardians' before her that clearly didn't do such a great job if he had been stuck in that book up until now. He probably thought that she couldn't do the job either.

'Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence asshole.' She thought, completely annoyed.

Oh how she really wanted to give him a piece of her mind. Before she did however, a thought popped into her mind. There were five other Elder Guardians that could have been chosen to do this (barring the one that was destroyed of course), what made him so special? She had to find out.

"Alright, so I get that. You were sealed away in this book to be released when the time came to act as a guide because being the 'Descendant of the Guardians' apparently sucks. How come you were the one to get trapped in the book and not one of the other Elder Guardians?" She asked him again.

At this question, Maximus went from being affronted to just being plain annoyed. He pinched the bridge of his nose. She could sense that however he got stuck in that book; it wasn't one of his finer moments.
"If you really must know the answer to that question, I drew the short straw. SOMEBODY had to stay behind to make sure that when the right 'Descendant of the Guardians' came along that they didn't screw everything up so we drew straws to see who would stay behind. I got the short one." He replied through gritted teeth.

She could sense that he really didn't like talking about that part but seriously he drew the short straw? Ouch that had to suck big chunks. She knew at it really wasn't a laughing matter but she just couldn't help it, a 400 year old being just explained her that he got trapped in a book for god only knows how long because he drew the short straw. There was just something not right about that. She could feel Stephen shaking behind her and she knew that he was trying to hold back laughter too. Hell, Wong was even snickering a little. Suddenly, the loud clearing of a throat caused everybody to snap back to attention.

"If everybody is quite finished laughing at my misery then perhaps we could be back to the point at hand!" He exclaimed in aggravation.

After Maximus said that, she instantly felt bad. They were all laughing at something that probably hurt and sucked. She knew that she should apologize to him. No need to piss off the person who is supposed to guide her through what will probably be the worst thing to happen to her yet.

"Sorry, Maximus." She apologized.

At her apology, his electric green eyes softened a fraction but he didn't say anything. Instead, a knowing look formed on his face.

"You still have something to ask me, little girl." He said knowingly.

She couldn't help the look that formed on her face. So despite the fact that he was a spirit, he still had all of his sorcerer abilities and he liked to read people's thoughts without permission too. He was like another Stephen with twice the arrogance, lord help her. This was going to be so much fun. She knew that she couldn't lie to him because he would know instantly. Well, crap.

"Yes." She said truthfully.

"You wish to know how you got pregnant while on medical contraception do you not?" He asked knowingly.

She cringed and she felt her face heat up in embarrassment. She hadn't realized that she had been thinking THAT loudly.

"Yes." She repeated.

"Well that's an easy one. The Guardian blood that runs through you makes you only half human. So any human medications would only be about half as effective on you then they would be on a regular human." He explained.

Hearing this, she let her head drop into her hands. How could she be such a moron? She knew to some degree that she wasn't human yet her mind never stopped to think once how human things might work on her. Then again, how could she really even know such a thing in the first place? Ugh, all of this was so screwed up that it was starting to give her a headache. She knew that Stephen could sense her warring emotions and came to kneel in front of her. He held her small hands in his large ones and gave her that look that she loved so much. The one that told her that everything was going to be okay and if it wasn't he would do whatever it took to make it okay again. He was about to speak but before he could Maximus ruined the moment.
"Excuse me, but we currently have more important things to deal with so the lovey-dovey crap is going to have to go on the backburner for now!" He interrupted loudly.

She couldn't help the snort that tried to escape her at the fact that Maximus just said the word 'crap'. Noticing this Maximus merely rolled his electric green eyes at her in exasperation. She knew that she wasn't making this easy on him but she couldn't help it between trying to digest everything that he was telling her and the effects of using so much magic in such a short period of time. She could sense that despite the fact that it was the last thing that he wanted to do, Stephen went back to his previous position standing behind her. However instead of resuming his ministrations on her head again, he started running his thumb across the back of her neck instead. This calmed her even more than being caressed on her head. She was ready to listen to anything Maximus had to say now. She could sense that Stephen and Wong were listening just as well too.

"Thank you, now, I take it you have read the contents of the book that I came from?" At her nod he continued. "Good, then you know about the door that seals away the forbidden dark magic."

She, Stephen and Wong listened to him intently has he continued to speak.

"You know that you are meant to keep the balance of good and evil. The way you do this is by keeping guard of that door. Behind that door this darkest magic you can possibly think of, its call is seductive and it ensnares nearly every being who tries to get past it and try to take the dark magic for their own. No sorcerer or any other being for that matter could ever hope to control what is behind that door but it doesn't stop them from trying though. That's where you come in little girl, your job is to stop them by any means necessary." He finished.

She gave him a questioning look at what he was telling them. She wondered why he sounded so grave as he was explaining it all. Couldn't she just go in there, vaporize whatever was trying to get to the dark magic like she did the faceless ones and then just leave again? How bad could it really be? Okay well, she knew sort of how bad it could be. Getting bit by that faceless one really sucked a lot but it didn't kill her. She knew that dark magic was a terrible thing and she didn't like it but could this door be really any worse than they were? By the look that Maximus was sporting she could tell that he was reading her mind again and he didn't like what she was thinking. She could sense that he didn't think that she was taking the situation seriously enough she wanted to tell him otherwise but the look on his face got worse so she decided that the best course of action would be to just keep her mouth shut instead.

"You really want to know how bad it could be? So be it little girl, I will show you just how bad it could be." He stated in a voice that quite honestly scared the shit out of her.

She watched with some curiosity and trepidation as he held out his palm face down and something began to materialize out of it. She realized that it was a key. The key was black as night with some red spots on it. They reminded her of rust spots. The key hung on a black chain which he held onto. As he brought the key closer to her, something began to happen to her and whatever it was it wasn't good. Her eyes became large and eclipsed to black but she wasn't losing control of her magic or anything. Whatever this was, seemed to effect Wong as well (not nearly as bad as it was effecting her) but not Stephen for whatever the reason. She could sense the key calling to her in her head begging to her take it and go unlock the door it belonged to. She knew which door that was. As she continued to stare at the key the voice became more insistent and she became more lost to its pull. It was so strong now that she thought it would drive her mad. She wanted to snatch that key so goddamn badly and get to that door. Just as she reached out to grab the key, something told her not to. Or maybe it was someone; they had a beautiful deep voice. Somehow, she knew that this voice was very important to her but her mind was so foggy that she couldn't put a finger on it. The terrible, evil seductive voice pushed itself to the forefront of her mind once more. She had to fight it before
she was lost forever.

"Get out, get out, GET OUT! Get out of my head right now!" She screamed, clawing at her ears.

She could vaguely make out somebody else yelling to. It was the deep voice that she loved so much.

Stephen

He could no longer sit by and watch what Maximus was doing to his little love. In a way he understood what the spirit was trying to do but this was by no means the way to do it. He thought about what happened to her when she got bit by the faceless one and he couldn't help the deep growl that emanated from him. Enough was enough; this was not the way to teach her a lesson no matter how valuable Maximus thought it to be.

"Maximus you've gone far enough with your little lesson put that godforsaken key away now!" He yelled.

Maximus merely shook his head at him.

"Not yet Stephen Strange, bond mate or not you know as well I do that she needs to learn that she can't go around thinking that this is all fun and games! The cost will be her life!" Maximus yelled back.

He was completely shocked at the fact that somehow Maximus knew who he was without him ever saying so. For now he put that thought on hold, his only concern was for Irena and their little treasure growing inside of her belly. He could feel the bond exploding to life. Maximus was going to put that key away or else he would send him right back where he came from. He could feel his magic crackling to life.

"She already knows that! Can you really blame her for acting the way she is!? You've put the entire weight of the world on her shoulders! Put away that key right now Maximus or so help me god I will send you back where you came from!" He roared.

He could sense that Maximus seemed to realize that he meant business and that he would figure out a way to trap him back inside that book. Maximus relented and pulled the key away from Irena. Slowly, it began to dematerialize and he could sense that Irena was returning to normal thankfully. He really never wanted to witness anything like that again. As Irena came back to herself, he could sense that her emotions were a disaster and she was dangerously close to reaching her breaking point. No person should have to be burdened with such things especially not his little love. He tried to calm her again and this time Maximus made no move to stop him.

Irena

Again, she found herself trying to decipher what just happened to her. Nobody anywhere should have to go through this crap yet here she was. How could she hope to do any of what she was being tasked to do when she couldn't even handle the key to the door that she was supposed to be protecting. She looked to Maximus begging him for answers. She could see that his electric green eyes held emotion in them. She could sense that even though he seemed to be an arrogant turd ninety percent of the time, he genuinely wanted to try and guide her in the right direction. She knew that he simply didn't want her to end up like the previous 'Descendant of the Guardians' and wanted her to understand what it took to do the job that she was destined to do.

"Do you understand the gravity of the situation now, little girl?" He asked seriously.

She nodded and he looked at her approvingly.
"Good girl. There is something else you need to know, I'm sorry." He stated softly.

She could sense that he was indeed sorry for what he was about to say to her.

"Unfortunately, the previous 'Descendant of The Guardians' was in fact a total, complete dunderhead. A complete waste of life actually, he thought his magic to be a curse and wanted nothing to do with it. Even tried to get rid of it, in fact he disregarded your ancient one's teachings all together not to mention he was a complete jackass to anybody unfortunate enough to cross his path. Eventually, he left Kamar-Taj and disregarded his duties and who he was all together. Honestly, the only thing that he did that was worth any merit at all was produce you." He started.

Her mismatched eyes got large at what he was saying. Her biological father was the previous 'Descendant of the Guardians' that failed so badly and because he disregarded his duties something horrible happened. She wasn't even sure that she wanted to know what it was.

"You are aware of a mother's role, yes? They protect and nurture their child with unwavering ferocity. Your Ancient One loved you like a daughter, little girl. So much so that she did just that. Somebody needed to guard that door and she took that on that role. Unfortunately, it came with a price because she was not the one that was supposed take on that role but you were too young at the time and your father was nothing but a selfish blithering coward. She made a deal with darkness incarnate in exchange for safe passage through the dark dimension to keep guard of that godforsaken door. So you see, she wasn't siphoning dark magic from the dark dimension, it was siphoning something much more from her. She took the mark of darkness to protect you until you were ready to take on this job." He finished.

She looked at Maximus with unshed tears in her eyes. As if she didn't have enough crap on her plate to sort out now she that that tasty bit of info to digest too. How can one person be expected to deal with all of this? The way Maximus looked back at her indicated that he was reading her thoughts again. This time she didn't even have the energy to be pissed off at him for it.

"Little girl, I didn't tell you this to make you despair. I told you this to help you understand that this is a job you have to do. You can't be like your father; you can't let the sacrifices made by people who cared about you greatly be in vain and regardless of what you think you are not alone in this. You have your bond mate, bond brother and me to help you." He encouraged.

Despite the fact that he sort of spat the last part of his sentence out like the last place he wanted to be was helping her, she knew that Maximus meant well by what he said and she tried to calm her emotions. But that was easier said than done. She got up and started pacing around the library hoping that would help a bit. Stephen also tried to help calm down some but she couldn't force herself to sit still long enough for anything that he did to have any effect which in itself is not normal at all. Normally, he could have her calm in minutes but all of those other times she hadn't been going through anything like this. This time, she was just wound way too tight. She knew that she just had to get out of there and have some time alone to process everything that was happening to her. Judging from how she felt, she knew that there was enough gas left in the tank that she could summon a portal. The problem was once she did that she would have no magic left but she knew that Stephen would be able to seek her out through the bond and find her before that became a problem. She only hoped that she had enough wits about her to get where she wanted to go. She stopped pacing and preformed the hand movements to open a portal. She stepped through it without a second thought. She had been so wrapped up in getting away from the situation that she hadn't even noticed that she opened that portal without a sling-ring.

Stephen sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. This was not how he though his day would go at
all. While he elated at the fact that Irena was pregnant, he was extremely worried how she was taking everything. She was extremely sensitive and this was a lot of information for her to take in at once. He knew that the prudent thing to do would be to find her before something bad happened. She had depleted her magic so much that she would have to walk back to Sanctum from wherever she went and he refused to let that happen. Because of the bond and because she was pregnant now his instincts were on overdrive. The bond was driving him to go to her. He turned to Wong with every intention of telling him to go back to Sanctum with Maximus but before he could, Maximus spoke up.

"Oh dear, do you think I said too much at once?" He asked.

It was clear that he was addressing both him and Wong with that question. He had to force himself to keep calm and could sense that Wong was doing the same. What kind of question was that? He just told her that pretty much the fate of the entire universe rests on whether or not she could guard this door from hell and that somebody she cared for dearly, hell, he did too sacrificed herself for her safety because her biological father was a giant selfish asshole and the topped if off with the fact that she was pregnant too. What did he think was going to happen? He took a deep, calming breath; he had to remind himself that things like tact probably worked differently from the time he came from.

"Everything will be fine Maximus; she is just tried and overwhelmed. I will go and find her. Wong here will take you back to Sanctum and I will be along with Irena shortly. You can move around freely right?" He asked curiously.

At that question, Maximus nodded.

"Yes, when Irena freed me my magic bonded to hers and I can now move freely between dimensions once more." He explained.

Hearing this caused his hackles to rise, what did he mean that his magic was bonded to Irena's? Only he was supposed to be bonded to Irena in that way.

"What do you mean her magic bonded to yours?" He demanded to know.

It was clear that Maximus could sense his anger at the explanation. His electric green eyes widened and he was quick to amend what he said.

"Oh that's not how I meant it! It just means that I can now travel between my dimension and this one. I need to be bound to something in the dimension to do so. No need to get your panties in a twist." He amended, holding his translucent hands up in surrender.

He rolled eyes at the 'panties in a twist' comment; he would be more pissed about it but he had far more important things to deal with at the moment.

"Alright, just go back to the Sanctum with Wong and I'll be there with Irena soon." He said in a voice that left no room for protestations.

"And make sure to grab the book too." He added as an afterthought.

He could sense that Maximus wanted to protest but that previous threat about putting him back where he came from still hung in the air and he didn't. Wong opened a portal and he obediently went through it and Wong followed after. He made sure to grab the book from off of the floor before he left. Stephen opened his own portal and went to track Irena down. He knew exactly where she would be.

Irena
Exiting the portal, Irena collapsed onto the soft grass underneath her. She struggled to close the portal. After she managed to do so, she sat on the grass for a moment and caught her breath. She didn't want to stay there for too long in case somebody mistook her for a hurt runner or something of the like. She pulled her sorry ass off of the ground and started the trek to Darcy's apartment. She still had so many questions floating through her mind, the most prominent being how in the CRAP was Stephen not affected by that freaking key? It made her loose her mind and she could sense that it was affecting Wong too granted he probably way more experience with dark magic than she did so he could handle it way better. Still she had to know why that was. She got back and was more stable; she would find Maximus and ask him right away why that was.

Halfway there, she came across a small drugstore and decided that she wanted to experiment with something. She went inside and purchased a home pregnancy test. She was curious to see how well it would work on her. Exiting the pharmacy with a small plastic bag in her hand, she walked the rest of the way to Darcy's apartment. She almost cried with relief when she got there. She really needed to rest for a bit. She punched in the code to Darcy's apartment and let herself in. She was not shocked to see Darcy and Bucky playing Nintendo. They were shocked to see her, however. Instantly abandoning their game, they were both standing in front of her in seconds.

"Doll face, what happened to you? Did you and Stephen have a fight again?" Bucky asked, worry clearly coloring his tone.

She could sense that Darcy was just as worried.

"Do I have to go kill him?" Darcy added with a scary looking glint in her eyes.

She shook her head in exasperation.

"Stephen and I are fine, this has nothing to do with him…well, okay it kind of does but it's not his fault I swear." She reassured.

"Okay so then what happened?" Darcy asked curiously.

Gesturing for them to follow her, she went to sit her ass on the couch. She was exhausted and she refused to stand any longer. After both Bucky and Darcy sat on either side of her, she explained her entire ordeal to them. She left out the part where she was pregnant for the time being. After she finished, both Bucky and Darcy looked at her incredulously.

"Jesus doll face is it impossible for you to catch a break?" Bucky muttered

"Apparently it is." She muttered back, running her hands through her messy curls.

As she did this, Darcy's eyes zeroed in on the plastic bag that still remained clutched in her other hand.

"What is this?" Darcy asked curiously.

Before she could do a damn thing about it, Darcy snatched the plastic bag from her and looked inside. Her blue eyes became large with shock as she pulled the small box containing the home pregnancy test from the plastic bag. Darcy gave her a look that demanded answers.

"Dude, are you pregnant!?" Darcy exclaimed in shock.

As Darcy's exclamation Bucky eyes also bulged in shock not believing what he was hearing.

"Um well, there is about a 99% chance that I am. I bought that to double check." She mumbled,
shifting uncomfortably.

"But how is that even possible? I thought you were on the pill?" Darcy asked in shock.

She knew that question was coming. She could also sense that poor Bucky was getting so uncomfortable with where this conversation was going. She knew that he really didn't want to know about his little sister's period habits. After giving her a gentle look and giving her shoulder a reassuring squeeze, he quietly excused himself from the conversation. That caused Darcy to snicker at him a bit and her to roll her eyes at Darcy's behaviour as per usual.

"It's because I'm not human, the Guardian blood running through my veins makes me that way. It makes any human medication less effective on me." She explained.

An understanding look formed on Darcy's face.

"Wow, you aren't you just getting all kinds of the shit end of the stick, Jesus girlie." Darcy said softly.

She let out a soft sigh and nodded.

"I know, but I don't think this is a bad thing. Scary as all hell yes, bad no. Don't ask me how I know that." She shrugged.

Darcy nodded in understanding.

"Well come on! You got to take the test now! I've got to know if I'm becoming an auntie or not for real!" Darcy exclaimed excitedly.

Darcy pulled her up off of the couch and dragged her to bathroom. She handed her the small box and gently shoved her inside of the bathroom. She didn't even get to say one word before the door was slammed in her face. She sighed again and opened the small box. She got herself situated onto the toilet and followed the instructions. She peed on the stick and then finished up quickly. She barely managed to get her pants back up and cleaned herself up before Darcy re-entered the bathroom causing her to jump.

"Holy crap D! Can't you at least knock first?" She griped.

Darcy giggled sheepishly.

"Sorry girlie, I am just way too excited." She said excitedly.

She shook her head in exasperation and picked up the test. Sure enough there were two lines in the little window indicating that she was in fact pregnant. So that was one piece of human technology that DID work on her. Darcy snatched the test so she could get a look at it. She let out a squeal and started jumping around. She could sense the excitement just oozing from her pores and she shook her head softly.

"D, I love you and I know you are excited but I feel like a bag of boiled garbage right now could you tone it down just a bit?" She begged.

Darcy's blue eyes softened at her request.

"Sure no problem girlie, did you want to go lie on the couch until Stephen gets here?" She suggested.
Darcy knew as much as she did that Stephen would be here to get her anytime soon. She gave Darcy
a nod at her suggestion. She disposed of the pregnancy test and left the bathroom with Darcy. She
went to the couch and lied down. She drifted in and out of sleep until she could sense that Stephen
was on his way. Sure enough, an orange portal opened up in Darcy’s living room and Stephen
stepped through it and didn't let it close. He wasted no time in coming to her.

"Are you alright, sweetheart?" He asked, she could hear the worry in his deep voice.

She nodded sleepily.

"Just very tired." She murmured.

He nodded in understanding. He still bent down to check her over though; she could sense the
protectiveness just oozing from him. He stroked her hair and then her shoulders. He paid special
attention to her stomach, stroking and caressing it. Again, she felt a small pulse of magic in her
stomach where he was stroking. It was if she could almost sense that the little life inside of her was
enjoying the attention as much as she was.

"Mmmm, that feels good." She sighed.

He let out a warm chuckle.

"Come on; let's get you into bed good and properly." He intoned softly, giving her a soft kiss on her

Sometime Later

Suddenly, Irena woke with a start and scrambled out of bed. Sometime ago, Stephen must have
covered her up. She was hit with such bad nausea that she didn't know if she would make to the

After cleaning her mouth out, she let out a long groan and sat back down next to the toilet. She didn't
dare leave until she knew it was all gone for sure. Stephen gave her a sympathetic look and stroked
her sweaty hair back. He got up suddenly and she wondered what he was doing until she realized
that he was running her a bath because he knew that it would help her to feel better. God, what in
god's green earth did she do to deserve him? He always knew just what she needed when she needed
it. Suddenly, she felt her stomach start churning once again. As soon as it started again, Stephen was
back behind her holding her unruly hair back and rubbing her back until she was done. Unfortunately, because her stomach was empty all she threw up this time was a little bit of bile. Her throat felt raw when she finished. Seeing that the bath had filled enough, she got up on wobbly legs and let out a painful groan. She was also sore now from all the exertion that it took to free Maximus earlier. With a little effort, she stripped herself of Stephen's shirt and her underwear and climbed into the bathtub. She let out an audible sigh of relief at how good the warm water felt on her sore achy body. She watched Stephen divest himself of his clothes too and step into the tub. She wasted no time in nestling herself between his legs and he wrapped an arm protectively around her stomach. She nuzzled into his chest and let out a contented noise. As she and Stephen sat in a contented silence, her mind began to wonder. Could she really do all of this? Be a good mother and do her job as 'the descendant of the guardians'? Could she do her job without succumbing to the darkness? So many what ifs, she knew that Stephen could sense her inner turmoil.

"You are letting your thoughts get away from you again." He stated knowingly.

"What if I can't do any of this?" She croaked, her voice hoarse from throwing up all of that bile earlier.

She knew that Stephen knew that when she 'any of this' she was referring to all of it.

"Of course you can sweetheart; you have me, Wong and Maximus to help you. Not only that but you have Tony, Pepper, Darcy and Bucky. I could go on. You are so loved and none of us will let you fail. As for being a good mother, you nurture and care for everybody. You are so loving that I have no doubt that you will make an excellent mother." He reassured fiercely.

"Stephen, thank you." She murmured softly.

She turned so she could place a soft, tender kiss on his lips.

He told her just what he needed to hear. She knew that no matter what happened in this crazy new adventure that they were going on, they would tackle everything together.
To Start a Whole New Adventure

Chapter Summary

A/N: Hello everybody! I now have about 11 chapter's to post until I am completely caught up! Again thank you for all the kudos! It means the world to me to see a lot of people enjoying this story. It really is my pride and joy! I hope you all enjoy this chapter and more should be up soon!

Stephen

Deep in thought, Stephen absentmindedly stroked Irena's stomach. Currently, she was just about sleeping on top of him not that he minded of course. The last couple of days had been exceptionally hard on her and he would make it easier any way he could and that included letting her sleep for just about a day and a half. He happily stayed with her the entire time knowing that both needed the time alone with each other to digest things. The only time either of them left bed was to go use the bathroom. Thankfully, her nausea seemed to be improving if it got worse again he would have to ask Wong to whip up something for her seeing as human medications would only be half effective on her anyway. He hadn't been all too shocked to learn that she wasn't totally human considering the way her magic behaved. It didn't bother him in the least. He loved the way she was quirks and all. She wouldn't be her without them. He gazed down at his little love tenderly. He still couldn't believe that he was going to be a father it made an indescribable emotion jolt through his system in a very good way. As he continued stroking Irena's stomach, he was shocked to feel some kind of magical pulse underneath where his hand was stroking. It was almost as if the little life inside of her was enjoying his ministrations but that was impossible wasn't it? He would have to research that at a later date, as for right now he had a few things to discuss with Maximus. The two prominent being how was he not affected by that hell spawned key and how did Maximus communicate with The Ancient One when he was trapped inside of a book? He sighed, he really did NOT want to leave her but he knew that he should have his conversation with Maximus before she woke up.

With a little bit of effort, he managed to free himself without waking her and went to go and clean himself up. After he was clean and satisfied with his appearance, he got dressed in his 'sorcerer garb' and opened the bedroom door completely prepared for the onslaught that was about to come from the other side of the door. Sure enough, the cloak levitated into the room and then Little Sapphire bounded into the room following close behind. Both of them wasted no time in going to Irena. Sapphire made herself comfortable in the crook of her shoulder and his cloak wasted no time in wrapping itself around her stomach protectively. His eyes softened at the scene in front of him, he really enjoyed the fact that his cloak loved her as much as he did. He watched Sapphire try to slink over to her stomach and curl up on top of it. However before she could, the cloak seemed to realize what was happening and one of it ends reached out to shoo her away none too gently. He watched them battle it out for a moment, snickering softly.

'What a pair those two make.' He thought to himself.

He shook his head in exasperation. He had half a mind to tell them to cut it out but Irena did have to rejoin the living at some point and they weren't killing each other or actually hurting her in any way. Instead, he decided he would leave well enough alone and he left the bedroom quietly. He wasted no time in going to library. Upon entering the library, he never got to even get one word in before
Maximus started questioning him about where Irena was.

"Finally! So where is she? Please don't tell me she is still sleeping!" Maximus exclaimed.

He looked heavenward and suppressed an annoyed sigh. Again, he reminded himself that Maximus was from a different time and didn't realize that he was being a huge jackass.

"Yes, she is still sleeping. She's been through hell and back in the last two days plus she is pregnant. I think she's earned the right to sleep as long as she wants to. Why does it really matter anyway?" He asked.

"It matters because I want to start training her in strengthening her mind. It will help her navigate through the dark dimension a lot better." Maximus explained.

Hearing this caused the bond to flare to life, since learning of Irena's pregnancy it seemed to have gotten even stronger. It drove him to protect her and their unborn child with unwavering ferocity. He didn't want Irena to do any training while she was pregnant for fear that it might put a strain on the baby. He wasted no time in voicing this to Maximus.

"No Maximus, I don't want her doing any training while she is pregnant it could put a strain on the baby." He stated.

He could sense that Maximus was becoming annoyed with him but he didn't care. Irena and the baby came first.

"Look I know you don't like this, but it needs to happen. I can give her protection spells to keep her physical body from any harm while she is in there but I cannot protect her mind. She has to be strong enough to keep the evil out. All I want to do is to teach her to keep unwanted intrusions out of her mind. The lessons can be short and sweet that way it shouldn't put any strain on the baby. She can even stop if it becomes too much and we can start again some other time. Hell, you can stay with her the entire time if that will help any. I only want to help her keep the darkness out." Maximus tried to explain reassuringly.

He could sense that Maximus was trying his hardest to tamp down his annoyance and be reassuring but he still didn't like it at all. Suddenly, the image of her suffering while Maximus held the dark key in front of her popped into his head and a surge of unwanted emotion jolted through him. That was something he hoped to never ever see again. He sighed, if Maximus could help her to keep darkness out of her mind while she was in that godforsaken dimension (not that she would be going there when she was pregnant) then he supposed he would have to let him train her but there would be some ground rules involved.

"Alright fine, this training will only happen in my presence and the minute she is uncomfortable in any way it stops and I decide when it starts again, do I make myself clear?" He relented.

Knowing that he meant business, Maximus held up his translucent hands in a placating gesture.

"Yes, undoubtedly." He said in agreement.

He could tell that Maximus really hated being bossed around but Irena and the baby's safety came before anything and everything else.

"Good, now I have questions for you. How did you communicate with the Ancient One when you were trapped inside that book and why was I not affected by the key like Irena was?" He asked curiously.
He watched as Maximus' silvery brows knit together in what he assumed to be confusion. He knew that the proud spirit would never admit that out loud though. Clearly, this wasn't going to be as straightforward as he first thought it would be.

"Well, I can explain to you how I communicated with the Ancient One while I was trapped in that godforsaken book but…I cannot tell you why you remained unaffected by the key I'm sorry." Maximus replied.

He frowned at that, he thought Maximus was all knowing. He decided to voice that thought.

"What do you mean you don't know why I wasn't affected by the key? I thought you knew everything?" He asked voicing his thought.

He could sense that Maximus went from annoyed to just plain angry at that question.

"Excuse me? What in the hell do you think I am a crystal ball!? Contrary to popular belief, I do not know everything. Now do you want know how I communicated with the Ancient One while I was trapped or not?" Maximus snarked.

He inwardly rolled his eyes at Maximus' reaction the question. It was a legitimate question and he could tell that it bothered him because he felt he SHOULD know everything the arrogant prick.

"Oh would you relax Maximus, I wasn't trying to insult you I was asking a legitimate question and yes I would very much like to know how you spoke to the Ancient One while you were trapped in that book." He retorted.

For a moment he seriously thought Maximus was going to pout and not tell him but then he conceded thankfully.

"You see, your Ancient One was a cut above the rest. Her magic was much stronger than the average sorcerer. She seemed to be the only one that could sense my presence within the book. The book tempted many sorcerers, but none of them knew that I was trapped inside of the damn thing. Although she couldn't free me, she did manage to find a spell that loosened the book's hold on me. It enabled us to communicate telepathically at the very least. It was also a good way for her to relay information to me that she wanted Irena to know after she freed me" He explained.

He was shocked to see that Maximus' electric green eyes held emotion. Perhaps he wasn't just a pompous asshole after all. He quirked a brow and Maximus gave him a weird look.

"What?" Maximus asked hesitantly.

"Nothing, just shocked you can show any other emotion besides 'pompous asshole' and 'annoyed'." He joked.

Maximus rolled his electric green eyes at him.

"Well…whatever!" He huffed, floating away.

He shook his head at Maximus' retreating form. As soon as he learned of Irena's pregnancy and her heritage he knew that he was headed for a whole new kind of adventure but this was just a tad ridiculous.

*Irena*

Irena let out a long groan. She had been having a great dream until somebody stepped on her face.
Cracking open her eyes, it took her no time to realize it was in fact Sapphire's little scaly foot on her face. She could hear growling too. She forced herself into an up-right position and pried Sapphire off of her face. Looking down, it took her no time at all to realize what was happening. The cloak was wrapped protectively around her mid-section and was relentlessly trying to shoo away Sapphire. Now that she was fully functional, Sapphire turned to look at her with a look in her big yellow eyes that said 'can you please get the big crimson asshole off of me?' and she let out an exasperated sigh through her nose. She shooed away the cloak from Sapphire.

"Look, I know you are just trying to protect me and all but do you really want to get peed on again?" She asked that cloak.

Knowing exactly what she said, the cloak left Sapphire alone immediately. It gave her belly one last gentle squeeze before disengaging from her all together. She couldn't help but laugh.

"I didn't think so." She laughed.

Sapphire gave her a grateful look and then went to make herself comfortable on Stephen's pillow and that caused her to snicker. She had taken to lying on his pillow because somehow her little dragon mind realized it pissed him off.

Running her hand through her wayward curls, she let out a long groan. She really didn't want to face everything but she had little choice in the matter. She knew that whatever Maximus had waiting for here when she went to find him it would not be pretty. Her mind wandered to what happened to her when Maximus dangled that key in front of her and she shuddered. Whatever Maximus had planned it couldn't be worse than that. Forcing herself to crawl out of bed, she padded to the bathroom. She wasted no time in stripping and jumping into the shower. After cleaning herself up, she shampoo and conditioned her crazy curls. Once that she was satisfied that she was clean, she turned off the shower and hopped out. She wrapped a towel around herself and towel dried her hair some so it wouldn't be dripping everywhere. After she finished with her hair, she brushed her teeth and then left the bathroom. Thankfully, her nausea had subsided for now. She didn't know how long that would last but she would enjoy it while it did at any rate. She went to Stephen's wardrobe to pick out some clothes. Even though she still wasn't feeling a hundred present, she decided to actually dress in something that wasn't workout clothes. It wouldn't be long before none of her clothes fit her anymore and she wanted to enjoy them while she could. She threw on her Linkin Park shirt and her favorite pair of skinny jeans. She found a couple of socks and put them on, mismatched of course, this time green and pink. She also found her hoody and threw that on too. She didn't know whether it was because she was pregnant or dealing with stress poorly but she felt chilly all of the time as of late.

Now that she was satisfied with her appearance, she opened Stephen's bedroom door and exited the room. Before she left, the cloak levitated up to her and re-wrapped itself around her stomach protectively. Considering it felt like she was going to her doom, she to all the comfort she could get including that of the cloak kind. Letting out a soft sigh, she started her trek to the library. She even went extra slow to put off the inevitable even more. When she finally did reach the library, she was shocked to hear bickering coming from the inside. She realized instantly that it was Stephen and Maximus and she faceplamed. Oh dear lord, she was afraid that this was going to happen. She shook her head, they sounded like an old married couple.

Entering the library, she saw that Stephen and Maximus were bickering over…something and she saw that Wong was trying to hide in the corner looking seriously disturbed. It was clear that he just walked into that mess. She had to do something to stop them before things got really messy. She wasted time in stepping in between Maximus and Stephen. Both men looked a little shocked at seeing her there suddenly.
"Alright children, it's time to play nice." She said slowly as if she was talking to small children.

Now that he was focusing on her, she could sense that Stephen's ire at the situation decreased dramatically. Maximus on the other hand, got even more aggravated at seeing her. The look on his face kind of scared her. She inwardly sucked in a breath.

'Alright, so this is part where I go to my doom.' She thought to herself.

"There you are! You weren't seriously trying to hide from me were you? Come on, we have a lot of work to do, little girl!" Maximus exclaimed.

At hearing that she became even more freaked out, why did she feel like she was not going to like the 'work' he wanted her to do? She started thinking about what training would do to the little life growing inside of her and became even more worried. She was a little shocked at how fast her maternal instincts seemed to kick in. She knew that Stephen could sense her warring emotions and came to her rescue. Giving her a tender look, he turned to face her and started stroking the sides of her face to calm her down.

"I know all of this hard on you, sweetheart. Maximus wants to help you to strengthen your mind to keep the bad stuff out when you travel to the dark dimension. He can give you spells to protect your physical body but this is the only way to protect your mind. I know it sucks, but I promise you won't have to go to that place while you are pregnant." He soothed.

As he said this, he turned to Maximus with a look that said 'I dare you to defy me'. She was relieved when Maximus said nothing in return. The last thing that she wanted to do was go to that place while she was pregnant. She let out a small sigh, she turned to Maximus.

"Okay, what do I have to do?" She asked him.

He gestured for her to sit down at the wooden table in the middle of the library. After getting the cloak to disengage from her with a little effort, she complied and sat down. Stephen wasted no time in standing behind her and started caressing her hair knowing it would help her to stay calm. The cloak went and settled onto his shoulders. One end came up and started stroking her shoulder. Between that and Stephen's ministrations, she felt herself feeling immensely better. Maximus sat across from her and began explaining what the training entailed.

"Alright little girl, this procedure is actually quite simple. I am going to enter your mind and your objective is to kick me out? Do you understand?" He explained.

For some reason, she didn't really didn't like the idea of Maximus violating her mind but she knew that she needed all the help that she could get in fending off whatever she came across in the dark dimension.

"Alright, go for it." She conceded.

Maximus nodded. He closed his electric green eyes and began to concentrate. She followed his lead and closed her eyes as well. Sure enough, she began to feel a slight tingling in the back of her mind. Soon, the tingling turned into a presence and she knew that Maximus was in her mind rooting around. While it wasn't painful, it was uncomfortable as all fuck. She could feel him trying to open all kinds of doors in there that she didn't want him to. She tried with all her might to boot him out but she wasn't quite strong enough to do it. Suddenly, she sensed that he came across a door that she really didn't want him to open. That 'room' was filled with memories of her and Stephen 'together' and they were for her eyes only! She tried harder to boot him out but all she managed was a tiny nudge. He 'entered' the room and she could immediately sense that he knew that he crossed a line.
He wasted no time in severing the connection between their minds. Her eyes snapped open and she glared at Maximus in a way that should have melted him into the ground. She could feel that her face must be on fire and she could see that Maximus was completely embarrassed too. She knew that if he still had the ability to blush, he would be very red right now too.

"Oh dear, I am so sorry." He apologized.

She could sense that Maximus was being sincere but she still continued to glare at him, if she didn't already feel violated before she sure as HELL did now.

"What the hell Maximus? Don't you know what in the crap boundaries are?" She hissed angrily.

Maximus had the decency to look sheepish and she knew that he was going to apologize again but she didn't want to hear it. She felt humiliated and embarrassed so much so that she didn't even face Stephen. She knew that it was stupid but she just couldn't help it. Her hormones were probably not helping the situation either. She knew that they hadn't gotten very far in this 'training' but she had been violated enough for now and they could continue it at some other time. She got up without another word and left the library. She knew that Stephen would come and find her eventually anyway. She could hear Stephen yelling at Maximus for humiliating her but she tuned it out. God, she felt horrible for Wong. The sanctity of his library had been destroyed. She began to seriously wonder if freeing Maximus from that book had been the best idea. Suddenly, she was shocked to sense the presence of her 'mother'.

Oh my sweet, sweet child I know it's so hard but you can't give up now.

Hearing that was the last straw on the camel's back, she felt the tears coming and she knew that she couldn't stop them. She knew that her 'mother' was right but it just sucked so damn much. Nobody should have to go through this, especially while pregnant. She reminded herself that she wasn't alone at all and had so many people helping her. She repeated that again and again in her head like some kind of mantra and it helped some. She managed to make it to the lounge and then collapsed into the couch. She was crying in earnest now, she knew that she needed to get it all out otherwise she would feel even worse than she already did. She brought her knees up to her chest and tried to calm herself down. If this was what her hormones were going to be like throughout the entire pregnancy, then god help her and Stephen for that matter. She knew that she needed to talk to Wong about whipping something up to ease the symptoms to make it easier on her.

As she became distracted by thoughts of her pregnancy, she began to calm down a little. Even though the thought of becoming a mother still scared the crap out of her, she knew that this pregnancy was a very good thing. The little life growing inside of her was the product of her and Stephen's love and that made her feel very good inside. She felt a small pulse of magic in her belly and she knew that her little peanut seemed to agree with her. She smiled softly to herself and stroked her belly where she felt the pulse. As she continued to sit there and think, other things popped into her mind. She knew that she would have to talk to Clint about going to see Laura, she needed all the help and advice that she could get and she knew that Laura would more than happy to help her out. Of course that meant that she would have to tell Clint that she was pregnant. She could picture how that conversation was going to go. Probably not half as bad as what would happen when she told Tony. She could only hope that telling Tony that she was pregnant would go half as bad as him finding out she and Stephen were together. Thinking of that particular conversation caused her to shudder; she had a feeling that this one would go better somehow. She didn't know how she knew that but she just did. She pictured a tiny little human running around the tower calling Tony 'grandpa Tony' and she giggled. She loved how that sounded. She continued to let her mind wandered and thought about asking Darcy to go to the mall with her at some point soon. She knew that eventually would have to get maternity clothes (she shuddered thinking of that) and she wanted to pick up a
couple of books on pregnancy. She knew that Darcy would want to go with her to do that.

Suddenly, she felt that Stephen was coming and snapped out of her thoughts. Sure enough, he entered the lounge. She saw that that he had disengaged from the cloak possibly because he knew it would be a giant pain in the ass in this situation. He was looking at her in a way that made her insides melt. She knew that she was all disheveled; she still had tears streaming down her face and she was pretty sure her nose was a snotty mess but here he was staring at her like she was the most beautiful thing in the world. She still wondered every day how she got so lucky. He wasted no time in coming to her and he sat down on the couch next to her. She wasted no time in cuddling into him and he wrapped his arms around her. She felt the tears start up again, she just couldn't help it.

"Oh my poor sweet little love, shh." He cooed to her.

He shifted her so she sitting on his lap but facing him so she could cuddle into him better. She buried her face into his neck and he weaved one of his hands through her messy tresses.

"I'm sorry." She murmured, her voice muffled by his neck.

She felt Stephen let out a sigh.

"Oh kitten, none of this is your fault. Maximus knows his boundaries now, nothing like that will ever happen again I promise." He reassured.

"Thank you Stephen." She said with relief clear in her voice.

"Of course." He murmured, placing a soft kiss on her temple.

For a moment they sat there enjoying the silence until Stephen moved his hand from her head to her lower back and started stroking there. After a few minutes of stroking, he let his hand underneath her hoodie and shirt. He began caressing up and down her back. He couldn't help but melt further into him. He knew that she needed comfort and distraction and was giving her exactly what she needed. Soon, his other hand also found its way underneath her hoodie and shirt. She couldn't help enjoy his ministrations thoroughly. He gave her hoodie a tug indicating that he wanted it off. She complied immediately and lifted her arms so he could get it off of her. He started his ministrations in earnest now and bent his head to capture her lips in a searing kiss. She couldn't help the groan that fell from her lips and this just served to egg him on. She began to sense his desire and that only fueled her own. He let his hands continue to caress upwards bringing her shirt with them until he reached just below her chest and stopped there for a moment stroking everywhere but where she wanted him to. She knew that he was teasing her trying to heighten her arousal. She could FEEL his desire now and she knew that he was making damn sure that she could.

"St-Stephen, we shouldn't be doing…that here. Someone could catch us!" She gasped as he hit a particularly sensitive spot.

Breaking the kiss, he nipped at her neck playfully and let out a deep chuckle.

"Oh my sweet little kitten, you still have so much to learn. Knowing that there is a chance of being caught makes everything that much more fun!" He purred in her ear huskily.

She couldn't help the jolt of desire that ran through her at him saying such a naughty thing in that deep voice of his. God help her.

Meanwhile, In the Library

Wong
Wong sighed, he was so happy to finally have to quiet in his library. He poked his head out of his hidey-hole and saw that Maximus was sitting at the table reading a book. He wondered how he was turning the pages until he remembered something. One of his dirty little secrets was that he enjoyed watching paranormal videos on the interweb. Contrary to Stephen's popular belief, he did know what the interweb was and Beyoncé too for that matter. All of the videos he's watched so far (real or fake) showcased the 'spirit' moving something or another so it made sense that Maximus could somehow do that too. It was just weird looking though. At this point, he was just thanking his lucky stars that Maximus was being quiet. No matter what he said, Irena needed a break. His poor little sister had been put through the ringer and if he had to keep Maximus busy in here until she was ready to give that mind training another try however long it would be, he would do it. He went back into his hidey-hole and continued to sort through his herbs and medicines. He wanted to whip up some things that would help her get through her pregnancy easier. Anything to lower her stress levels at this point.

As he was doing this, the magic in the sanctum suddenly shifted. This was something that he was used to now. It usually happened when Stephen and Irena got…intimate. Thinking of that caused him to shudder; it was not something he enjoyed thinking about. He didn't know what why it happened but he suspected it had something to do with how strong they both were and how strong the love between them was. Not every sorcerer believed it but love was indeed the strongest magic that there was. Thinking of the subject of strong magic, he knew that contrary to what Stephen thought he was not an average sorcerer. Not even close, he learnt magic at a ridiculous pace, so ridiculous that it would probably mentally destroy a normal sorcerer. He thought about how he had no reaction to that key and wondered if it had something to do with the fact that he had no darkness in his heart. He had a theory that he needed to discuss with Stephen when he got the chance. He had a distinct feeling that Irena was never supposed to guard that door on her own at all.

Suddenly, he heard Maximus make an exclamation probably at the shift in the sanctum's magic. He stuck his head back out to and saw that Maximus was about to leave presumably to find out what the 'problem' was.

"Stop right there!" He exclaimed.

Maximus gave him a strange look at being told to stop.

"But shouldn't we…" Maximus started but He cut him off.

"No, that was normal, trust me." He explained.

"But…” Maximus tried again.

"NO!" He repeated.

"Oh alright…” Maximus conceded, sitting back down.

Inwardly letting out a sigh of relief, he again disappeared back into his hidey-hole. He continued to put ingredients together. Just as he took a sip of the tea he sitting on top of his work space, Maximus spoke out loud. It was clear he worked out where the shift in the magic of the sanctum had come from.

"My word, those two are going at it like a couple of bunnies in heat." He stated calmly.

At hearing what Maximus just said so calmly, he choked on his tea. It took all he had not to spit it everywhere. After he cleared his throat, he stuck his back out again and looked at Maximus with a look that clearly said ' Where in the blue hell did you learn THAT from?"
"What? I spent over 200 years trapped in that damn book do you really think I wouldn't pick up things along the way?" He snarked.

He literally had no hot clue how to respond to that.
Stephen

Stephen sighed, it had been exactly two days since Irena tried to start that mind training with Maximus. No matter what he did, he hadn't been able to convince her to give it another shot and he tried everything. She hadn't spoken to Maximus in those two days either. He knew that she knew deep, deep down that he hadn't overstepped his boundaries on purpose but the fear of being humiliated once more kept her from going to seek him out. After being humiliated or violated so many times in her young life, he understood where she was coming from. Oh his poor sweet little love, he felt so bad for her. All her whole life she had been pushed around or humiliated by somebody. By people who were supposed to be caring for her and that she trusted not to do her harm. He knew that she never expected it to happen to her all over again however inadvertent it was. Oh how he wished there was something he could do to make all of this easier on her or there was a way to take some of the burden off of her somehow.

He turned to look at her meditating on his desk and his blue eyes softened. It seemed that meditation was the only thing that really helped with her moods as of late. Wong did give her some medicinal herbs to help calm her which did help some but not like meditation did. Wong also gave her some medicine to help with the nausea that plagued her at night and thankfully it worked really well. Somehow, she had been blessed with night sickness instead of morning sickness and it wreaked havoc on her sleep. His too for that matter but he would never ever leave her to suffer alone. As he continued to stare at her, he found himself unable to look away from her. Even just dressed in her jeans, concert tee and hoodie he found her to be beautiful. He could see the Dragon's tear glowing underneath her hoodie and it made her even more so. It's been said time and again that women seemed to glow when they were pregnant. Whoever said that was right, she looked positively radiant and he couldn't seem to get enough of her. Part of him wanted to be so naughty and disrupt her meditation so he could kiss and caress her but he knew that was a bad idea. It was never a good idea to disrupt a sorcerer during his or her mediation. It made them extremely cranky among other things and Irena didn't need any more reasons to be cranky.

Forcing himself to turn away, he concentrated on the reason he came into his study in the first place (not that being near her whenever he could wasn't a reason). He wanted to find information on why he had no reaction to that key. That had been driving him up the wall since it had happened. He was the type of person that needed an answer for everything and when he didn't have one he needed to find it. He and Wong had an interesting conversation about it when he went to retrieve the medicines that he made for Irena. Wong told him about a theory that he had worked out in his head. Wong thought that it might have something to do with the fact that he held no darkness in his heart. Could that mean he was immune to darkness all together? If that was the case, then maybe he really WAS meant to find Irena. After all, who would be better for somebody meant to fight darkness then
somebody immune to darkness?

Of course this was all speculation until he found some real information. He continued to search through his books until he came across a book titled 'Unusual anomalies of The Mystic Arts'. He couldn't help quirk a brow at the title of the book. He wasn't sure if he would call what happened to him an anomaly per se but it was better than anything he found so far. Pulling the book from the shelf, he went to his desk and sat down being careful not to disturb Irena of course. He opened the book and began reading. He couldn't believe the wealth of information that it had. Being immune to darkness WAS an anomaly and it was a big one. It was a very rare gift to be given and it didn't happen very often. He was suddenly reminded of something that Ancient One once to told him. She once told him that she had been waiting for him for a long time. Could this be what she meant? As he continued to ponder this, he could sense that Irena was coming out of her meditation state. Sure enough, he watched as she let out a long yawn and stretched. After she finished, she turned to him and smiled softly.

"Hello, handsome." She said softly.

He smiled warmly back at her.

"Hello gorgeous, feeling better?" He asked knowingly.

She nodded; her curls bouncing a little a she did so. He found it to be quite endearing.

"Yes much better, what's with the book?" She asked curiously.

His smile grew at her curiosity. This was another thing he so adored about her, she was always ready to learn something new.

"It's a book called 'Unusual anomalies of The Mystic Arts'. I was looking for information on why I didn't react to that key." He explained.

At his explanation, he sensed her curiosity increase drastically. He knew that she wanted to know why didn't react to that key as much as he did. He watched her hop off of his desk and walk around it so she could join him in looking at the book. He wasted no time in pulling her into his lap. She cuddled into him and got comfortable.

"So what have you found so far?" She asked excitedly.

Like him, she seemed to know that whatever it was the made him immune to the key it was a good thing.

"Not much except that being immune to darkness is in fact a huge anomaly. Normally, every sorcerer has some kind of darkness in his or her heart. Whether they choose to let it grow or not is up to them. I seem to be the exception to that rule; I have no darkness in my heart and seem to have no reaction darkness. According to this book, the last know sorcerer to have such an anomaly existed over 300 years ago but of course there is no name or any information on this sorcerer only that they had no reaction to dark magic either." He told her.

He sighed all of this seemed to only heighten the mystery and that only served to make him more annoyed at the whole thing. She seemed to sense this. Gently, she placed her small hands on both sides of his face and stroked softly.

"Stephen, relax. I promise you we will figure it out don't worry so much about it." She soothed.

It was amazing how fast her touch calmed him down, he let out a soft sigh and nodded.
"Your right sweetheart, thank you." He said gratefully.

"Of course." She murmured back, placing a soft kiss on his jaw.

He let out a contented noise and relaxed even more under her ministrations. They sat in a companionable silence for a moment, until she removed her hands from his face (much to his extreme displeasure) and let out a small little giggle. It was clear that she was thinking of something that amused her greatly and it piqued his curiosity. He just had to know what it was now.

"What's so funny, sweetheart?" He asked curiously.

She looked at him a little sheepishly and he quirked his brow at her. Okay, now he really wanted to know what was going on in that pretty little head of hers.

"I was just thinking how ironic it is that somebody who used to be a perfect royal prick for like 90 percent of his life somehow managed to be completely immune to evil. It's just so funny." She laughed.

He rolled his eyes in exasperation; of course she was thinking that.

"Oh you cheeky little thing, I should punish you for that!" He growled playfully.

She gave him a look as if to say, 'bring it on!' He let out another playful growl and pounced. His hands easily found their way underneath her hoodie and top. He found her hips and gave them a gentle squeeze. She let out a little squeal and tried to push his hands away but he was stronger. She put up with the 'assault' for a little longer and then he could sense that she was giving into him.

"Okay, okay! I give! I surrender!" She squealed.

Chuckling deeply, he moved his hands from her hips to her belly and began to caress it letting his thumb move in little circles. He felt a slight pulse underneath where he was caressing. It seemed that their little treasure was enjoying his ministrations as much as she was. Each and every time he felt that little pulse it amazed him. It seemed that their little treasure was just as special as his or her mother. As he continued to caress her stomach, she melted back into him and they lapsed back into a comfortable silence. After a few minutes, he broke it.

"Sweetheart, I know you won't like what I am about to tell you but you need to hear me out. I think you should go and try mind training with Maximus again." He suggested softly.

Immediately her demeanor went from relaxed to sour. He expected that to happen. Her cute little freckled nose wrinkled at the suggestion and he could tell that she wanted to tell him 'no'.

"Do I have to Stephen? He just going to go in places I don't want him to all over again." She pouted.

She gave him quite the pout lip and he gave her a soft look back.

"Sweetheart, I promise you he won't do that ever again. He and I had a good talk about boundaries and he knows better now. I think it's important you strengthen your mind to keep the bad stuff out when you have to go to that godforsaken dimension. I would never forgive myself if something bad happened to you. I want to do anything I can to keep you protected and I'll stay with you for each and every lesson." He coaxed.

She let out a sigh and chewed at her lips. He could sense that he had her relenting.

"Alright you win, I'll go but I don't have to like it." She grumbled.
He chuckled at that.

"Fair enough sweetheart, let's go and talk to him." He chuckled.

She looked at him with a look that told him that she would rather do anything but that. He gave her an affectionate look back. He gave her a gentle nudge and she got up from his lap very slowly. He missed her warmth instantly but he knew that this had to be done. He took her hand in his and together they left his study.

Irena

They whole entire way to the library, Irena grumbled to herself. She could see that Stephen was regarding her with amusement and she so wanted to stick her tongue out at him. All in all, this was the last thing she wanted to be doing but she knew that he was right. This was something that she had to do. As much as it pained her to admit it, she needed all the help that she could get in navigating through the hell hole that is the dark dimension. As she and Stephen entered the library, she let out a soft sigh. It took no time at all for Maximus to zero in on her and he wasted no time in floating up to her. He had a weird emotion in his electric green eyes that she couldn't quite place. She could sense that it something to do with the fact that he acted like he didn't want to help her on the outside but on the inside however it was a completely different matter. She knew he would never ever say that out loud though. Suddenly, the look was gone as quickly as it was there. She shrugged it off for now; she just wanted to get her mind training for the day over with.

"So little girl, are you ready to give this another go?" He asked calmly.

She let out a sigh but nodded.

"Yeah, I suppose so." She mumbled, trying not to make a face.

He rolled his electric green eyes in exasperation and gestured for her to sit down at the wooden table in the middle of library. He took the seat across from her and Stephen went to stand behind her. He wasted no time in caressing the top of her curly head knowing it would help calm her and make the whole process much easier.

"Alright little girl, you know what to do. Close your eyes and concentrate." He ordered.

She did as she was told and he did the same. She felt the familiar tingle in the back of her head and then a presence. She knew that Maximus had entered her mind. It felt...less intrusive than last time. He again started rooting around but did not enter any doors this time thankfully. She started trying to boot him out again. This time she did manage to give him a bigger nudge but still couldn't boot him out of there yet. It frustrated the ever living CRAP right out of her. She tried again and again.

'Get out of there, you asshole.' She thought knowing that he would be able to hear it.

Her crass words merely caused him to let out a barking laugh and fight her harder. She pushed back; she wasn't going down without a fight. He continued to root around until it was clear that he came across...something. It wasn't like the door full of memories from last time, this was more like a bunch of small boxes of she didn't even know what they were that she more than likely pushed to the back of her mind and forgot about it. She felt him root around one of the boxes for a moment and then another. Suddenly, he abruptly severed the connection between their minds. The abrupt disconnect left her feeling fuzzy, she shook it off and gave him a 'what the hell was that all about?' look.

"Maximus, what in the hell did you do that for? You could have broken my mind!" She exclaimed.

Maximus merely rolled his electric green eyes at her.
"Oh would you quit being so melodramatic! You are perfectly uninjured, your baby is fine and your mind is most certainly not broken as you put it. A complete mess yes, broken no. In order for these lessons to be worth anything, you have to work on clearing that garbage out before you can try to clear me out. You harbor so much fear and anxiety in your mind that if you were to try and enter the dark dimension the way you are now would get you eaten alive. Even if I managed to teach you to boot me out in the state you are in it would do you no good with all that bad emotional junk still in your mind. The parasites that live in that hell hole feed off of fear and anxiety like it's an all you can eat buffet for them." He stated harshly.

She looked at him with shock clear in her mismatched eyes. She thought meditating helped clear all of that stuff out. She voiced this.

"I thought meditation was clearing all of that stuff out?" She asked, confusion lacing her words.

Maximus gave her an exasperated look at her question.

"Meditation can help with the mood part yes, but the only way to clear all of those boxes full useless crap emotions in your mind is to deal with them yourself." He explained.

This explanation caused her to blanch a little. She was not talking to some shrink about all of her problems, to hell with all of that crap. She knew that Maximus had decided to read her thoughts again because he let out a long sigh through his nose and shook his head.

"It doesn't have to be THAT complicated, little girl. You have a bond mate right next to you that I'm sure would listen to anything you have to say. Talk to him and get rid of the emotional crap you insist on carrying around with you." He advised.

She turned to Stephen who was looking at her with that look that she loved so much. She was suddenly reminded of the fight that she and Stephen had about trust. She knew that this was exactly what Stephen had been talking about. She had been working very hard on trusting him completely but she knew that deep her in heart of hearts that no matter what she told herself she hadn't been able to yet. Maybe it was time she did; it would probably go a long way in easing her mood swings and make her generally a happier person to be around too. Besides, Maximus was right Stephen was her bond mate he deserved at least that from her.

"Alright Maximus, you're right. I think it's time I dealt with all of those boxes." She agreed softly.

She was still looking at Stephen when she said that, however, suddenly Maximus' emotions shifted drastically and it caused her to turn around. The relief he was feeling was almost palpable. Was he that worried about her losing her mind in the dark dimension? She thought he only put up with all of this stuff because he had to. She had been working very hard on trusting him completely but she knew that deep her in heart of hearts that no matter what she told herself she hadn't been able to yet. Maybe it was time she did; it would probably go a long way in easing her mood swings and make her generally a happier person to be around too. Besides, Maximus was right Stephen was her bond mate he deserved at least that from her.

"Good girl, come back for another lesson when some of those boxes are cleared out of your mind." He said trying to come off as indifferent.

For some reason, she could sense that he was trying to hide his relief. Before she could question him anymore on anything, he floated away to god knows where.

Letting out a soft sigh, she turned back to face Stephen who was still looking at her with that look
that she loved so much. The look that told her that no matter what happened, he would be there to help her get through anything. While she was still apprehensive about doing this, she knew that he would be there to help her get through it. She knew exactly where to start too. She knew that 8-12 weeks from now, she would need to go for an ultrasound to check the progress of her little peanut. She couldn't do that if she couldn't even step foot in a hospital. Thinking of what made her have such a phobia of hospitals caused her emotions to go haywire. For the first time since after Charlie died, she could feel a panic attack coming on. She knew that Stephen could sense what was happening to her. Immediately, Stephen had her out of the chair she was sitting in and his arms before she could even blink.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, you've got to calm yourself down. You've got to breathe. Whatever is causing this, I will help you get through it." He soothed.

He started rubbing large circles on her back and coaching her to take deep and proper breaths. It was helping immensely.

"That's it sweetheart, breathe." He coaxed.

After a bit, she managed to calm down and pulled back from him slightly.

"I'm sorry." She murmured, embarrassed.

He looked down at her affectionately.

"Oh my sweet little love, you have nothing to be sorry for. Do you want to go somewhere and talk?" He suggested softly.

She smiled and nodded.

"Do you think maybe we could go for a walk in central park?" She asked, looking up at him with hopeful eyes.

He chuckled softly and stroked her messy hair from her face.

"Of course we can sweetheart. Come on, let's go there now." He suggested, taking her small hand in his large one.

She nodded and let him lead her out of the library. Together they walked through the Sanctum until they reached the entrance. Stephen opened the door for her and let her exit first and then he exited after her.

'Ever the gentlemen.' She thought affectionately.

Hand in hand, they walked the streets of New York until they reached central park, it happened to be a rare sunny day and that helped improve her mood drastically. Normally, New York was nothing but rainy and cloudy. This was most definitely a nice change for the norm. They entered Central Park and somehow managed to find an occupied park bench with not too many people hanging around it. They both sat down and she wasted no time in cuddling into his side. He shifted so she would be a little more comfortable. He looked down at her expectantly and she chewed at her lips wondering how she was going to start this conversation. She decided that she would just do it like pulling off a Band-Aid and get it over with.

"Um, I have a huge phobia of hospitals." She blurted all at once.

He quirked his eyebrow at her, clearly not catching anything she just said.
"Sweetheart, I'm sorry but I couldn't catch a word of that. You need to slow down and start again." He said calmly.

She let out a soft sigh and let his deep voice soothe her. She tried to explain herself once more.

"Okay, I have a huge phobia of hospitals. Like, I literally can't be anywhere near one at all and believe me I've tried." She explained softly.

There was more than one time where Tony put himself in the hospital from blowing himself up with his stupid experiments and she physically could not bring herself to go to the hospital to go and visit him. She felt terrible about it. Both Pepper and Darcy tried to help her but nothing worked. Every time she would get anywhere near any hospital, she would literally freeze right up and be unable to move until someone helped her get away from the area. The more she thought about it, the more stupid and ashamed she felt about it. She knew that Stephen was sensing her emotions. Gently, he forced her to look at him. He was looking at her with nothing but tenderness and that almost brought tears to her mismatched eyes.

"Oh my sweet little love, you have nothing to be ashamed about. A phobia of hospitals is a very real thing and I will help you get over it." He promised.

He let his thumb stroke along her jaw and he gave her a tender kiss. She sighed into the kiss and began to relax. It already felt like a load was being lifted off of her but she needed to tell him how her phobia started in the first place. When oxygen became a necessity, she gently broke the kiss. He gave her a knowing look.

"There's more isn't there?" He asked knowingly.

She gave him a small nod.

"Yes there is." She admitted softly.

"It wasn't always like this; it started when I was 8 years old after I was taken out of that foster home I told you about. I was…really messed up from it. Like I was physically a mess form it, the foster dad didn't only like to use the belt. If he got really mad, he used fists too and I knew I had to protect those little girls. Anyway, when I got out of there, they took me to the hospital to fix me up. The foster care lady was nice enough and stayed with me while I waited to get checked over. The triage nurse that looked after me was nice enough, but the doctor who cleaned up my back was an asshole. He didn't even give a damn about pain or anything. Like how could you not give some kind of pain relief to an 8 year old? After that, there was Charlie. When I told you he went to sleep and never woke up that wasn't all of it. He was in the hospital for quite a while because his asshole 'parents' wouldn't let me see him, Tony would sneak me in to see him. On the last time I got to see him was when he died. He went into cardiac arrest and the doctors couldn't revive him. When you see something like that, it gets seared into your brain. I couldn't step foot into any hospital after that." She explained.

After she finished her explanation, she tried to look away from Stephen but he refused to let her. His emotions were so strong that they threatened to overwhelm her but not in a bad way at all. It was looking at her with a look that told her that he would do anything to help her get over this. She could sense that she struck a chord with him especially with the asshole doctor part because he used to be just like that asshole doctor. Only caring about the high profile patients that challenged them and not giving a damn about the little guys.

"Oh my sweet little love, I cannot even begin to say how sorry I am that you had to go through that. I swear nothing like that will happen to you again and I will help you through this I promise you." He intoned.
She gave him a tender look and stroked the side of his face. She could sense that he was enjoying it immensely and it calmed his emotions a little.

"I know you will Stephen, thank you." She murmured softly.

After telling him all of that, she honestly felt a thousand pounds lighter. She hadn't cleaned out every box of unwanted crap in her mind yet, not even close but this was a huge step in the right direction and she felt so much better. She was about to voice this to Stephen when the moment was effectively ruined by a softball bouncing off her head and landing in her lap. She and Stephen shared a look and she plucked it out of her lap. Thankfully, it was just a softball not a baseball and the throw wasn't very hard otherwise she probably would have ended up concussed or something like that. Getting up off of the bench, she looked around for the owner of said ball and her mismatched eyes zeroed in on the three boys standing a little ways away looking quite petrified. They all looked a little rough around the edges. One of the was a red head, one of them wore a blue baseball hat with dark curls poking out from under and the third boy had messy blond hair that could use a good cut. They so reminded her of Charlie, Toby and Alex, it was almost uncanny. She could hear the one with the baseball hat hiss to his redheaded companion.

"Oh jeeze nice throw Rusty! Do you know who that is sitting on that bench? He's that weird Doctor that practices all that weird magic stuff in that funny looking building in Greenwich Village and you just bounced a softball off the back of his girlfriend's head! He's gonna vaporize us for sure now!"

She heard the boy with the hat hiss to his redhead companion.

She couldn't help it, she really couldn't. She couldn't help but burst out laughing what that young boy just said, it was entirely too perfect. Somewhat regaining her composure, she turned back to Stephen momentarily and lost it all again at the look on his face. He honestly looked like wanted to go and give those boys a piece of his mind possibly for both the comment and accidentally hitting her in the back the head with the softball. Oh, Stephen.

"Stephen relax, they're just kids. They didn't mean any harm, no need to turn into a grumpy pants."

She giggled.

He rolled his eyes at being called a 'grumpy pants' and that caused her to giggle even more. She left him sitting on the bench while she went to return the softball.

Stephen

As he watched his little love go return the softball to those boys, his blue eyes softened and he let his annoyance slip away. It was amazing to watch how she interacted with those boys. She was kind and patient. Suddenly, an image of her interacting with their little treasure in that way popped into his mind and a jolt of emotion ran through him. It was something he couldn't wait to see. He knew that whether she choose to believe him or not, that she was going to be an amazing mother.

He couldn't help but think of something else as he continued to watch her, just how proud of her he was for opening up to him completely. He could sense just how much lighter she felt after telling him all of that and he knew how hard it was for her to so.

He knew that whatever fear and anxieties she had to face, she would never have to face them alone ever again.
To Take on an Important New Role

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey all here is another chapter, I am so close to being caught up! Please don't hesitate to tell me what you think of this and please don't stop the kudos they mean so much to me! :)

Irena

Sighing contently, Irena sifted through racks of maternity clothes with Darcy. Currently, she and Darcy were cruising through the mall. She had desperately needed a break from all things magic and decided that it was time for a trip to the mall with Darcy. Unfortunately, Stephen still really hated it when she went anywhere but he also knew that keeping her cooped up in the Sanctum forever would be bad for everybody's mental not just hers. It took a little bit, but she managed to convince him to let her go thankfully. Ever since she became pregnant, it seemed that the bond between them had gotten even stronger and so did his protectiveness over her. Not that she minded that part. She always found it extremely hot and sexy when he got all growly and snarly. She sought him out through the bond and sensed that he was pouting. She couldn't help but giggle inwardly. Oh Stephen. She knew that being away from her wasn't his favorite thing, it wasn't hers either but she really needed girl's time with Darcy. Besides, she enjoyed looking forward to the fun that they were going to have when she got back.

She continued to absentmindedly sift through the rack of clothes in front of her. She was so involved with her thoughts that she failed to notice Darcy sneak up behind her. Suddenly, she felt a hand on her shoulder and it caused her to jump in shock. She let out a little girly squeak too. Everybody looked at her and she blushed.

"Darcy, what in the hell was that for?!" She yelped.

Darcy laughed.

"Haha! I had to wake you up somehow. You were day dreaming about your hunky sorcerer again! Am I that boring?" She joked.

"Of you course you aren't! It just the bond…it just distracts me sometimes." she explained lamely.

Her explanation caused Darcy to snicker softly.

"Sure it does, you lovesick fool!" Darcy laughed.

Rolling her mismatched eyes, she stuck her tongue out at Darcy and Darcy merely continued to laugh back at her. She decided it was time to try a different store. There was nothing really appealing to her at this store. She could sense that Darcy felt the same way. None of this stuff was really her and maternity clothes or not she still wanted to look like herself.

"Come on D, let's try another store, this place is so not doing anything for me." She muttered, wrinkling her freckled nose.
"No kidding, last time I checked you weren't an old lady. Why does every store we go to want to make pregnant ladies look old?" Darcy wondered.

She and Darcy left the store and moved on to looking for baby clothes for a bit. It was time to take a break from maternity clothes shopping. They entered the first children's clothing store that they came across. Finding the baby clothes section, it took Darcy no time at all to start squealing over how cute the baby clothes were. She had a feeling that this baby was going to be spoiled rotten. She sifted through the baby clothes marveling at how small it all was. She still couldn't believe that she had a little life growing inside of her that would be wearing these little clothes in nine months. Gently, she stroked her belly and her mismatched eyes softened when she felt that small little pulse beneath her hand. She wasted no time in picking a few things that she liked. She made sure to pick out clothes that were unisex. She wanted the sex of her little peanut to remain a surprise until the end. She continued to pick out things until she couldn't find anything else that she liked. Darcy also picked up a few outfits that she wanted to purchase for the baby too. Yep, this baby was going to be spoiled freaking rotten. Together, they paid for their purchases and moved onto the next store. It went on this like for a bit, they went to one store picked either picked out what they wanted or didn't find anything and then moved on to another store. They went back and forth between looking for baby clothes and maternity clothes. She even managed to find a couple of pregnancy books and some maternity clothes that she actually didn't hate. They continued to store hop until Darcy dragged her into a really high end looking maternity store that honestly kind of scared the crap right out of her. There was no way that they would find anything remotely her in there and she knew it.

"D, what the hell are we doing in here? None of this is me!" She griped.

Darcy rolled her eyes.

"Dude, you have the money to spend why not take advantage of it?" Darcy said like it was the most obvious thing ever.

She supposed that Darcy had a point. She DID have a credit card with never ending funds on it.

"Oh alright, you win. What can a look hurt?" She conceded.

They entered the store and began to look around. Everything was so high end she was almost afraid to touch anything. She was shocked to find things that she actually liked. Some of the clothes were quite edgy. She might actually be able to work with some of this stuff, go figure that one. She continued to look around until a thought popped into her head that turned her veins into solid ice. She was using Tony's credit card to buy all of this stuff! At this rate, he would get the statement and find out she was pregnant before she could even tell him herself!

"Oh holy crapballs almighty!" She exclaimed out loud without even realizing it.

Everybody in the store turned and gave her the stink eye possibly because of her loud potty mouth. She had the decency to be embarrassed. Oopsie.

Darcy looked at her like she suddenly grew a couple of extra heads.

"Where in the hell did all of that come from?" She asked curiously.

"Um well, I've been using Tony's credit card to pay for all of this stuff so unless I go and see him today there's a good chance he'll find out I'm pregnant before I can tell him myself!" She explained, trying not to freak out.

Darcy laughed and gave her a reassuring pat on the back.
"Girlie, it'll be fine. There is no way that telling him your pregnant can't go any worse than when he found out you were with Stephen." She reassured.

She sighed, she knew that Darcy was right but it still didn't make her any less petrified to tell him. He had barely gotten over the fact that she and Stephen were magically bonded. Now she had to tell him that she was pregnant.

"Come on D, I better go and get this over with." She mumbled.

Darcy nodded in agreement. This was far more important that shopping. She and Darcy could finish their girl time on another day.

They went to pay for their purchases and left the store. She knew that there was no point in leaving the stuff behind considering she had already bought a bunch of other stuff. Exiting the mall with their purchases, they managed to locate Darcy's car quite quickly. Like the perfect gentlemen he was, Bucky offered to drive them there and wait for them in the car until they were done. No matter what either of them tried to tell him, he just wouldn't take no for an answer. She couldn't help but shake her head just thinking about it. No man anywhere would do anything like that now a days, Darcy didn't know how lucky she was in her own right. Sure enough, he was sitting inside of the car and reading a newspaper. He was such an old man trapped in a young man's body; she thought it was so adorable. She knew that he could hear them coming from a mile away because of his super solider hearing. He looked up from his newspaper and quirked a brow at them as they climbed into the car with their purchases and thankfully Darcy allowed her to hop into the front seat in case she got nauseated.

"Why are you guys done so soon? What happened?" He asked curiously.

"Um well, I did something really stupid. I used Tony's credit card to buy all of this stuff and I hadn't even bothered to tell him that I'm pregnant yet. Now he'll get the stupid statement with everything I bought on it and find out before I can even tell him at this rate!" She explained.

Bucky shook his head and let out a sigh.

"Well that sounds about right. Doll face, you need to relax I know it's stressful but Tony won't hate you. Like I've said before, he loves you. He'll get used to being 'Grandpa Tony' you'll see." He tried to reassure her.

She couldn't help but let out a giggle at the term 'Grandpa Tony'. She knew that Bucky was trying to ease her stress a little bit and she was relieved that it was working. Dropping the newspaper in the backseat, Bucky started the car and exited the parking lot. As they drove back to the tower, she concentrated on keeping her emotions stable. If she started freaking out, Stephen would feel her through the bond and he would likely try to come and rescue her. While she always found his protectiveness very hot, it wouldn't help in this situation. She needed to talk to Tony by herself first. If Stephen was with her, that would more than likely result in Tony trying to obliterate him off of the face of the planet and that was something that she really, really wanted to avoid. She let out a soft sigh, she reminded herself over and over again that Tony loved her and even if he freaked out a little bit that it didn't mean that he would ever hate her. Thankfully, she knew that wherever he was Pepper was never very far behind. She knew if anybody could keep Tony diffused, it was Pepper.

Pulling up in front of the tower, Bucky stopped the car so she and Darcy could hop out while he went and put the car away. After they entered the tower, she gave Darcy all of the stuff she bought to keep in her apartment while she went to go and talk to Tony. As she tried to move to go and talk to Tony, she hesitated and Darcy placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder.
"Girlie, everything will work out fine, you'll see." She reassured.

She nodded and tried to smile. She knew that Darcy was right and that she could do this.

Slowly as she could, she made her way to Tony's office. She knew that she was trying to prolong the inevitable but she couldn't help it. By some miracle, she managed to make it Tony's office without either freaking out or running away. Ignoring the protests of Tony's crazy receptionist, she walked up to Tony's office door and took a moment to seek out his emotions. The last thing she wanted to do was interrupt something that she really didn't want to see or feel for that matter. Not only could she sense Tony's emotions in the office but she could also sense that Pepper was in there with him too. She breathed a sigh of relief. She knew that this would be so much easier with Pepper there. Satisfied that everything seemed normal, she pushed the open the office to door. The movement caused both Tony and Pepper to turn her direction. They were looking at her with shock. Considering that she just appeared out of thin air, she couldn't really blame them. She could sense that Tony was extremely happy to see her. She inwardly winced; she was so about to completely destroy that happiness.

"Hey kiddo, if this isn't a pleasant surprise I don't know what is! What bring you here?" He asked curiously.

Shifting uncomfortably for a moment, she tried to figure out the best way to word what she was about to tell them. She just didn't want to blurt out 'Hey I'm pregnant and you're going to be a grandpa now! Enjoy!' That would break his brain for sure.

"Um well, I have something important to tell you Tony. Maybe you should sit down?" She suggested.

Tony gave her a look she never witnessed before and she could sense that his emotions were shifting rapidly but he did go and sit down at his desk.

"Okay kid, I'm sitting at my desk now. What is this important thing that you have to tell me?" He asked slowly.

She could sense Tony's dread at what she had to say. Suddenly, it was like a light bulb went off inside of his head. He looked at her with a look that told her 'I am begging you to tell me I am wrong'. Somehow he managed to figure it out for himself. She didn't even know what to do or say now.

"You…you aren't pregnant with Merlin's kid are you? Oh please tell me you aren't." He begged.

She had to tell him the truth. Tony was many things but stupid was not one of them. He would find out that she lied and it would make things even worse.

"I can't because I am pregnant with Stephen's child." She admitted softly.

For a moment, the room was so silent that she would probably be able to hear a pin drop and then Tony suddenly exploded to life. She had never seen his face turn so red in all of her life before.

"How in the FUCK did this happen?! Aren't you on the pill?" He spat.

She winced at him saying the word 'fuck' again and knew that he was very angry with her. He only used that word when he felt that she screwed up royally. She felt that that this wasn't really a screw up. Unexpected yes, screw up no. How would she get Tony to see that though? She tried her best to explain how it happened.
"I...I'm not human Tony, I was on the pill but it doesn't work the same way on me. I didn't know that, I'm sorry." She tried to explain.

She watched him trying to figure out how to respond to her explanation. She could sense that he wanted to ask her why Stephen hadn't tried to prevent it on his end. She couldn't help the embarrassment that flooded through her veins. He was making her feel like a 15 year old girl that had unprotected sex once, got pregnant and screwed up her life royally. He WAS her father after all; she supposed that he should be making her feel that way.

"How could you not be more careful? Does he know? What if he leaves you one day then what, kid?" He questioned angrily.

At Tony's string of questions, she could feel her emotions slipping more out of control. How could he ask her such a terrible question? She and Stephen were bonded, he loved her and the baby and he would never ever leave her high and dry. She could feel the control she had on her magic begin to slip a little bit, she was so angry.

"How could you ask me that, Tony? He would never ever do anything like that! Yes, he knows and excuse me for not knowing that I wasn't human and that the pill wouldn't work on me! This isn't exactly easy for me either, how would you like to find out you are the descendant of an ancient magical race of super sorcerers and be given the job from hell and be pregnant all at the same time! How would you feel? I need you to be supportive Tony, not sit there and ask me what I would do if Stephen left me! He won't leave me ever!" She yelled angrily.

Before Tony could yell back a response to her, Pepper intervened and for that she was extremely grateful.

"ENOUGH!" She yelled.

Both she and Tony looked at Pepper in shock. That was a large yell for such a small person. She was pretty sure everybody outside the office probably though she and Tony were insane by now or something. She watched Pepper approach Tony and try to calm him down just like she did for Stephen and she could sense that it was working. Her eyes softened, some days she could swear that Tony and Pepper were somehow bonded. They sure acted like it.

"Tony, please calm down! You know that Stephen loves her and would never leave her. No matter what you try to say, I know that you know that. She going through something huge and she needs our support more than ever now." She soothed.

Satisfied that Tony was much calmer, Pepper came up to her and hugged her.

"It's okay honey, everything is going to be fine you have our support no matter what." She said softly, rubbing circles on her back.

A choked sob erupted from the back of her throat and she clung to Pepper harder.

"I am so sorry." She sobbed.

She sensed Tony approaching and she felt his hand stroking the top of her head.

"No kid, I'm sorry you need me to be your father and support you and I promise you I will. I'll admit I was shocked and angry. Merlin isn't my favorite person but I'm trying, I really am. Whatever you need you'll get, I promise." He promised.

Hearing that, she felt like another load had been lifted from her shoulders and she began to calm
down immensely. She pulled away from Pepper and hugged Tony as hard as she could.

"Thanks Tony, you are the best dad a girl could ask for." She murmured softly.

She could sense the happiness at Tony's emotions at hearing her say that. Regardless of what he said out loud, she knew that he loved it when she told him that. She pulled back and gave him a watery smile.

"Here Grandpa Tony, give me your hand." She said softly, gesturing for his hand.

He gave her the stink eye at being called 'Grandpa Tony' but gave her his hand anyway. She took his hand and placed it on her belly. Sure enough, she felt a small pulse underneath where Tony's hand was resting. Tony looked at her with astonishment.

"Is that what I think it is?" He asked with astonishment.

She smiled and nodded.

"It looks like we are going to have a little mini-me running around the place." She joked.

She gestured for Pepper to place her hand on her belly. Again, there was a small magical pulse where Pepper had placed her hand.

"Amazing." Pepper murmured.

Suddenly the warm family moment was ruined by a giant crash that sounded right outside of Tony's office door and a bunch of commotion. She winced, she could sense that Stephen had arrived and he was not happy.

"Kid, I think you better go calm Merlin down before he blows up my entire tower." Tony suggested.

She agreed with Tony's suggestion. Another crash sounded outside the door along with a lot of yelling. She wasted no time in opening the door and before she could even blink or assess the situation she was scooped up into Stephen's arms and he began to look her over. He made sure to pay special attention to her belly, stroking and caressing it. She could sense that his emotions were wild and out of control, it was clear that he was lost to the bond at the moment. She had to calm him down somehow before something bad accidentally happened that he would regret later. Reaching up, she placed a hand on either side of his face and began stroking softly. His attention was solely focused on her and her ministrations. He let out a contented purr and tried to lean into her touch more. She could see that those beautiful stormy blue eyes of his that she loved so much were beginning to clear and he was coming back to himself.

"Shh Stephen, everything is fine. I am fine and our baby is fine. This was a conversation that had to happen. It's over now and everything is fine," She reassured.

He gave her an understanding look but she could also sense that he very unhappy that she did it without him.

"I understand that, but why did you do it without me?" He asked earnestly.

"Because, it was just something I had to do, I know it's hard to understand." She tried to explain.

He let out a sigh but accepted her explanation. He bent down and placed a tender kiss on her lips and it caused her to let out her own sigh. Suddenly, the moment was effectively wrecked by Tony clearing his throat.
"Um, as much as everything is all good and well, I need to talk to Merlin alone for a few minutes. Can you two, I don't know, go and discuss baby names or something?" He asked her and Pepper.

Parting from Stephen, she suppressed a giggle at the way Tony asked that question. While she could sense that Tony was becoming a little more accepting of the situation, she knew that he was still trying to process everything. She also sensed that Stephen began to freak out internally a little bit at the thought of being alone with Tony. She gave him a reassuring look.

"Stephen relax, I promise you Tony won't try to kill you." She reassured.

Stephen gave her a look like he didn't quite believe her but nodded anyway. She turned back to Tony and smiled.

"Sure thing Grandpa Tony, Pepper and I will head to the lounge and wait for you guys there." She giggled.

She looped her arm through Pepper's and they left before Tony could utter a protest at the name that he was now permanently branded with.

Tony

Tony could not believe how much his life just changed in the last hour or so. He was going to be a grandfather. God, he was too young for this shit. Looking over to where Merlin was standing, he had to suppress a little bit of snicker. He looked like he was about to either shit himself or blow chunks. In what order, he wasn't sure. He really wanted to be an asshole and use that to his advantage but he knew that both Irena and Pepper would kill him for it and he didn't want that. He inwardly let out a sigh; he supposed he should cut Merlin some slack. He knew that despite what he wanted to think, he had to grudgingly admit that Merlin loved Irena very much and would do anything for her. But still why did it have to be him? Hell, spangly would have been a better choice in his mind. Suddenly, he re-thought that thought, nobody would be good enough for Irena in his mind but Merlin was a hell of a lot better than somebody like Toby. He supposed that he better get this conversation over with quickly and put Merlin out of his misery before he died of a heart attack or something.

Stephen

On the outside, Stephen looked the picture of calm. On the inside however, he was a damn mess. He was sure that the minute that he entered that office with Tony that he was a dead man but he had little choice in the matter. Giving him a hard look, Tony gestured for him to enter the office and he did so obediently. Tony shut the office door and wasted no time in getting the conversation going.

"Merlin, I know you think I am going to kill you but I'm not. Irena loves you and would kill me if I did that so I won't but please listen to what I have to say. I don't think you will but as her father I have to tell you this. Please take good care her and that baby and don't screw her over. After everything that she's been though, she needs somebody to do right by her for a change. I am giving you my blessing to be that person, please don't make me regret it." Tony said seriously.

For a moment, he didn't even know how to respond to what he was just told. He knew that what Tony said was a huge deal. So much so that he chose to ignore the fact that Tony insisted on calling him by the stupid nickname he hated so much. He chose his words carefully.

"Tony, Irena and that baby are the center of my universe. I promise you they will be well looked after and protected as long as I live. You have my word on that, I assure you." He assured, his voice held no room for questioning.
He held his hand out and Tony gave it a hard, firm shake.

"You better not make me regret this, Merlin." Tony stated seriously.

"This conversation better not leave this room either." He added.

He quirked a brow at Tony's request but nodded, heaven forbid somebody found out that Tony actually had a heart.

"You have my word." He said without missing a beat.

Tony nodded and he could sense that the tension between them was gone, well most of it was anyway. Relief flooded his system. He knew that things would be much easier from now on. At least he wouldn't have to worry about Tony trying to obliterate him off of the face of the planet anymore.

"Come on, I'm sure you want to get back to Irena, let's go." Tony said, opining the office door.

Together they went to the lounge. They still weren't chatting like old friends or anything but it was much better than it was before anyway. They entered lounge and the sight that he was greeted with made his eyes soften. She was chatting away with Pepper and he could sense just how happy she was. She knew that whether or not Tony would accept the pregnancy was weighing heavily on her mind. Now that it wasn't anymore, she seemed a lot more happy and free. Her hair was as messy as ever, her mismatched eyes were bright and he could see that the Dragon's Tear was glowing softly underneath her shirt. While she didn't have any kind of a 'baby bump' showing yet, her stomach was slightly rounded. It was barely visible but it was there. He enjoyed the sight of it. All in all, he thought she looked beautiful. He wasted no time in approaching her. He wrapped his arms around her from behind and placed a tender kiss on her temple. She looked at him and smiled.

"How are you feeling, sweetheart?" He asked softly.

He could sense her fatigue and knew it was time for a rest. She had a hell of a crazy day.

"Tired, and I should be asking you that. I see you came back to me in one piece." She giggled softly.

He gave her an exasperated look.

"Come on you, it's time I got you back to the Sanctum so you can rest." He intoned softly, placing another kiss on her temple.

"Mmm, okay." She murmured in agreement.

He watched her say her goodbyes to Tony and Pepper. He also bid a polite goodbye to Tony and Pepper, thankful that everything ended up working out in the end. He wasted no time in opening up a portal. He helped Irena step through it first and then stepped through it after. He closed it and could sense her relief at being back at the Sanctum. He was relieved too; he let the Cloak and little Sapphire greet her for a bit and led her to the bedroom. They were way past due for some alone time. As soon as the bedroom door shut behind them, she wasted no time in changing her clothes and he couldn't help stare at her as she did so. He could feel his desire for her grow as she paraded around in just her underwear. He took in every inch of her very slowly. He momentarily paused at her slightly curved belly and then continued downward. By god did she drive him crazy, he loved every inch of her and loved that she was is and only HIS.

It was time that he showed her just how much he loved her, slowly and completely.

Maximus
Maximus let out a low annoyed growl, the magic in the Sanctum shifted once more and he knew that they were at it once again. If he could bang his head against the table, he would but he couldn't. How Wong put up with this crap, he did not know. He closed the book he was reading and ran a hand through his silvery hair. Why did he put up with this crap? Oh yeah, because she was the real deal and he HAD to protect her. When he first saw her, he had to suppress his shock. The resemblance was uncanny, he had to remind himself that it wasn't actually her and she was just her descendant. Regardless, it was hard looking at her all of the time but he was reminded why he trapped himself in that book purpose.

He absolutely refused to let history repeat itself.
To Deal with Blockheaded Brothers

Chapter Notes

A/N: So I am going to be honest here. It seems to me that nobody is really enjoying this story. Either that or I am using this site totally wrong. So unless somebody could tell me what I am doing wrong. Because really 17 kudos in almost 600 hits is bad especially when my other stories on here have gotten way more than that in half the hits. and there has not been a comment posted to this one. At least SOMEBODY commented on the other stories I've posted here. Clearly everybody on here thinks this story isn't very good. So I've decided that this is the last chapter of this story I am posting this site. Unless there is somebody out there actually enjoying this, if there is please let me know. Otherwise I will be deleting this story off of here. I hate to deliver an ultimatum but it is pointless to keep posting something nobody likes or is interested in. Thanks for hearing me out!

~Ryu

Stephen

Stephen let out a sigh as he sat on the bed and watched Irena sleeping soundly. It had been exactly two weeks since he had that conversation with Tony. After he and Tony finished their talk and went back to the lounge to meet up with the girls, he caught the tail end of their conversation. Pepper had been helping her put together a list of things needed for the nursery. Immediately, he decided that he wanted to put the furniture together without magic and do something special for Irena. Of course Tony was quick to laugh at him and remind him just how long that would take, the jerk. A few days after the conversation happened, He and Irena started looking at baby furniture so that they could begin to furnish the empty room next to his. He let Irena pick out what she wanted and had it shipped to the Sanctum. Currently, it was sitting in the empty room unopened and he wanted to change that. He wanted to do something special that Irena would appreciate. He decided to enlist the help of Wong and Maximus to keep her busy for the day so he could put everything together and surprise her. Of course Maximus put up quite the stink about it but he and Wong managed to convince him to stop being such a stick in the mud and have a little fun for once.

He, Wong and Maximus decided on bringing her to Kamar-Taj for the day so she could study up on the dark dimension. Not only would this keep her away from the Sanctum, it would help her to prepare for what she would be up against when she eventually had to enter there. This was an idea that even stuffy old Maximus approved of. The only problem now would be convincing HER that it was a good idea. He had to be really careful on how he broached the subject. If he sounded too eager for her to leave the Sanctum, she would know something was up and his whole plan would go down the tubes. She knew that he hated it when she left the Sanctum for any period of time and that he always wanted to be with when she was doing anything that concerned the dark dimension. Convincing her to do this without wrecking the surprise would be a tricky endeavor but he was up to the challenge.

Giving her a tender look, he gently started stroking her messy hair out of her face. He caressed and stroked her head for a moment before moving down to her neck. He stroked her neck with his thumb and let it run over the sliver chain of the Dragon's Tear. He then caressed his way down her neck to
her shoulders he stayed there momentarily before moving to his favorite part of her by far, was her stomach. While there wasn't any real 'baby bump' yet, there was a slightly noticeable curve there and he loved looking at it. He stroked and caressed her belly just waiting to feel that little magical pulse that would be there. Sure enough, he felt it. He felt an indescribable emotion surge through him each and every time he did. It was by far his favorite thing to feel ever. As he continued to caress and stroke her belly, he could sense that she was waking up.

She let out a long pitiful groan. Unfortunately, she had not been sleeping great the last few days. The herbs that Wong had given her helped her nausea in the beginning had stopped working for one reason or another. He and Wong were working on making up something to replace them. In the meantime, she had been stuck having crappy sleeps. Turning to face him, she looked at him through half-lidded eyes.

"Stephen, why did you wake me?" She complained.

He couldn't help but chuckle a little at her response. His poor tired little kitten, he felt like a little bit of an asshole waking her but he knew that she wouldn't want to waste away the day in bed however bad she felt.

"I'm sorry sweetheart, but I didn't think that you wanted to spend the whole day in bed." He laughed.

"I was actually thinking about it." She mumbled, burying her head into her pillow.

He shifted them so she was nestled comfortably in his lap and he was resting against the headboard of the bed.

"Oh come now, Wong and Maximus want to take you to Kamar-Taj to look up information on the dark dimension so you can study up and be prepared for when you eventually have to enter there. Wouldn't you rather do that?" He suggested.

At his question, she paused. He could sense that she was mulling it over in her head.

"You won't be there with me?" She wanted to know.

For a split second, her asking him that question almost undid him. Fortunately, he managed to keep his composure. No matter what he did, he would never like being apart from her but for what he was trying to pull off he would put up with it.

"Unfortunately no kitten, I have to go and check out another magical anomaly. I'm so sorry." He explained.

She gave him an interesting look at his explanation.

"So you mean to tell me you are going to let Wong and Maximus take me to Kamar-Taj without you for the whole day and you are okay with this? Are you on something?" She asked seriously.

Letting out a deep laugh, he shook his head.

"No my tiny little love, I'm not high. I would rather you be with Wong and Maximus then alone while I am away. I trust them to look after you. Also, looking after this door will be no easy task, I want you to be as prepared as possible. You could have a nice relaxing day reading books in Kamar-Taj and I will join you when I can. How does that sound?" He explained softly.

He watched her think over his offer with praying she would accept it. If she did, he would be in business.
Nestled in Stephen's lap, Irena thought long and hard about Stephen's suggestion. Even though she found his behaviour to be slightly weird, she found his idea to be a really good one. She knew that she needed all the help she could get in dealing with that stupid door. Especially if how she reacted to just the key was any indication of what it was going to be like. Plus, who knew what kind of creatures called that realm home. It would be a really good idea to read up on how to deal with them. Suddenly, another much more disturbing though popped into her mind. What happened if a sorcerer like Mordo somehow gained access to the forbidden door?

She shuddered at the thought. What a damn disaster that would be. It would surely spell the end of everything. She could not let that happen. Mordo craved nothing but power now, stealing every sorcerer's power that got in his way. He would seek to try and control what was behind that door but if a Guardian couldn't do it how in the crap did Mordo expect to be able to control it? She knew that he wouldn't be able to and he would release unimaginable hell upon the entire universe. She would do anything that she could to prevent something like that from happening. Plus, who knows? A change of scenery for a day might actually improve her crappy mood. Realizing that she had been thinking really hard for quite some time, she shook out of her thoughts and re-focused on Stephen who was looking at her with a bit worry. He must have sensed that her emotions were shifting a little bit.

"Welcome back sweetheart, you were gone for quite a bit there. Are you alright?" He asked softly.

She gave him a reassuring look and a soft smile.

"I'm okay Stephen, I was just thinking really hard." She said reassuringly.

"I think your idea is a good one. I can use all the help I can get in dealing with that door. Plus I think a change of scenery might do my mood some good." She added.

She watched Stephen give her a weird sort of offended type look and wondered just what she said that could have caused such a look.

"Oh so I see how it is, being in the Sanctum puts you in a crappy mood now does it? Well, fine then!" He said jokingly, pretending to be offended.

She couldn't help the giggle the fell from her lips. She knew that he was trying to cheer her up because she felt so crappy. He was so beyond perfect.

"Oh, that's not what I meant you goof!" She giggled, giving him a playful slap on the chest.

"Really now, I don't believe you!" He exclaimed in a mock huff.

She fought the urge to roll her eyes at his antics. It was game on now and this time she time she wouldn't lose!

"Okay fine, if that's how you want to be, I was going to ask you if you wanted to join me in the shower but to hell with that! I'll just go myself." She said playfully.

To prove her point, she wriggled out of his lap and got up off of the bed. She made her way to the bathroom deliberately slowly, hips swaying softly. She could sense that his emotions had shifted and she could feel his desire for her. It was strong and almost overwhelming. Feeling his desire caused her desire to grow tenfold. She got about half way to the bathroom and then he was suddenly behind her. She could feel him pressing up against her and his hot breath in her ear. She fought back the urge to let out a needy noise. She would never get enough of him.
"You play a game you can't win, my naughty little minx." He purred into her ear.

Without any hesitation, he ground himself into her ass and it caused a bolt of arousal to run through her system. She suddenly forgot about feeling crappy, she liked feeling this way far, far better. He ground himself into her ass once more and she couldn't help the sound that fell from her lips. He wasted no time in whirling her around so she was facing him and lifting her off of the ground so she could wrap her legs around his waist. She wrapped her arms around his neck and he claimed her lips in a searing kiss. She began grind herself against him earnest now and it caused him to let out a deep growl into the kiss. They would be lucky if they even made to the bathroom at the rate they were going.

In The Library

Wong

Wong let out a deep sigh. The magic in the Sanctum was shifting again. While this normally didn't bother him because he learnt to tune it out, today it drove him crazy. Maximus wouldn't stop complaining about it. His mood was far fouler than normal because he 'got roped' into helping Stephen pull off such a 'stupid' surprise. He never met anybody more cat-like in all his life. He pretended to be jerky and aloof but really he was anything but. No matter what he said, both he and Stephen knew that he wanted to help Irena however stupid he thought it was but right now his attitude stank. It was driving him up the wall. This was supposed to be fun not a chore. The only reason why Maximus even agreed to do it in the first place was the fact that she would spend the day learning about the dark dimension. There would be no forcing him to do it otherwise.

It was clear that there was something more going on with him, what it was he wasn't sure but he would speak to Stephen about it later. The magic in the Stopped shifting and he breathed a sigh of relief now maybe Maximus would shut up for a bit.

"Finally! I thought they would never detach from each other and get moving! Now we can get this stupid task done and over with!" Maximus snarked.

He fought the urge to roll his eyes. For one split second he almost considered pitching a book at Maximus until he remembered it would probably sail right though his stupid head and end up onto the floor. It wasn't worth damaging the book.

"Must you always be such a stick in the mud?" He groused back.

A little bit Later

Stephen

As he and Irena walked to the library hand in hand dressed and ready to go, he couldn't keep the goofy smile off of his face as continued to watch his little love. She was currently trying to re-adjust her top with her free hand as they walked. It was becoming clear that her clothes just weren't fitting her in the way they once did. While he loved it because it meant that their little treasure was growing bigger and stronger each day, it drove her up the wall. After a few more minutes watching her fight with her shirt, he gently stopped her. He gave her a look filled with affection.

"Sweetheart relax, you look fine the way you are." He soothed gently.

She wrinkled her freckled nose at him.

"That's easy for you to say you aren't turning into a blimp slowly." She complained.
He stopped them completely and gave her a gentle but stern look. He really disliked it when she said things like that about herself.

"Oh my sweet little love, please don't say things like that about yourself. You are beautiful." He intoned.

He could sense that her annoyance was slowly melting away. She gave him a soft look.

"Thank you Stephen, I need to hear that." She mumbled, placing a kiss on his jaw.

"Anytime." He murmured back to her.

They continued their walk to the library in a companionable silence. The entered the library and Maximus was immediately on top of them for taking so much time.

"Finally, I thought you two would never separate long enough to even get here!" He griped.

He ignored the smart-ass comment completely and gestured for Wong to open a portal to Kamar-Taj instead. Wong wasted no time in complying and made the precise hand movements to open up a portal. He then turned back to Irena; he gave her tender look and stroked the side of her face.

"Please be good." He murmured softly.

"Always." She murmured back.

He placed one last tender kiss on her lips. He ignored the gagging noises that both Wong and Maximus were making and gently nudged her in the direction of the portal. After hesitating for a moment, she walked to the portal and entered it. Maximus entered next and Wong brought up the rear. Before he entered, he turned back to face him and he saluted him. He rolled his eyes; at least Wong was enjoying the whole thing. Maximus was such a fun-sucker.

After the portal closed, he left the library and wasted no time in heading to the nursery. He couldn't believe how well that ended up working out. He could sense that while Irena thought his behaviour was a little weird, she was too busy thinking of other things to worry about it too much. He couldn't have asked for it to go any better, he had been a bit grumpy at seeing her go but he managed to keep his emotions from shifting too much, surprising her was way more important to him. He entered the nursery and started to take stock of what he had, where he wanted it to go and what he would need to put it together. As he did this, he suddenly felt a weird shift in the magic of the Sanctum.

'What the hell was that!?' He wondered to himself.

Immediately, he dropped what he was doing and left the room. He got to the foyer and was shocked to see Clint, Thor and Steve standing there. Clint held a red toolbox his right hand. All three of them were giving him dark looks. He could feel the protectiveness dripping from their pores; he could also feel a bit of anger bleeding through too. For a moment, he wondered why they were here in the first place until it hit him in the face like a ton of bricks. Tony also heard the tail end of Irena and Pepper's conversation and about him deciding to set up the nursery without using magic. He must have planned something behind his back. Oh Tony was so dead later, he didn't give a CRAP what Irena thought or said about it.

After a bit of a stare-down, Clint stepped forward and spoke first.

"So, you knock up our baby sister and don't tell us, that's real cold man. We should kick your ass for that." Clint threatened.
He quirked a brow at Clint's threat, he would have to do better than that to scare him.

"Or I could just open up a portal in the middle of this room right now and send you all to the dark dimension for all eternity." He countered.

Immediately, he could sense their emotions changing. He felt fear bleed through the anger and protectiveness. He knew that he mostly won this round.

Clint shifted and scratched the back of his head.

"Alright, how about we agree to disagree and we help you put together the nursery?" He suggested.

He thought for a moment and nodded at the suggestion. He would be a fool to kick this gift horse in the mouth and not accept the help. Especially from Clint, who actually knew what he was doing.

"Sure, I can agree to that suggestion. The nursery is this way." He said, gesturing for them to follow him.

All three men followed him to the nursery. Entering the room, they wasted no time in opening boxes and getting started. Clint even complemented Irena's choice of baby furniture. He started to think that this was going to go more smoothly then he originally thought until Thor opened his mouth and started talking about Asgardian child rearing customs and going into way more detail than any of them ever needed or wanted to know. He faceplamed, this was going to be a long, long day.

At Kamar-Taj

Maximus

He watched Irena try and concentrate the book that was in front of her. He seriously began to wonder if this happened to every woman when they got pregnant. Did they all have such screwed up attention spans? Against his will, a memory suddenly popped into his mind of his sweet Cesrine doing the exact same thing. She and Irena were so alike at times it was both frightening and heartbreaking at the same time. He tried to push the memory out of his mind, it would do him no good to think of such things now instead he focused on getting Irena to pay attention to the book in front of her.

"Little girl, would you at least try to pay attention the book in front of you for more than the 3 seconds?" He snarked.

She made an annoyed noise.

"I'm trying Maximus! It's not my fault I feel gross and barely got any sleep last night!" She snapped back.

He fought to keep his electric green eyes from softening. He knew that she was tired and not feeling well but she really needed to know this stuff. Again he refused to let history repeat itself, he wasn't able to save his Cesrine but he refused to let the same ill fate befall Irena. Also, he knew that Stephen would figure out a way to trap him in that stupid book forever if he and Wong failed in their mission to keep her occupied until he finished putting together his 'surprise' for her.

And he wanted neither of those.

Back at the Sanctum

Stephen
He fought back the urge to let out an annoyed growl. He could sense that Steve and Clint were getting annoyed too. Thor refused to stop complaining about the size of his hammer. He, Steve and Clint all repeatedly told him that a bigger hammer wasn't better but he refused to listen. He was seriously fighting the urge to portal him down the block. They would probably finish a lot faster if he did. Thor spoke once more and he had to fight to keep his cool.

"I demand you let me get my hammer! This puny hammer is not worthy of me!" Thor boomed.

He really, really wanted to snap at Thor but he knew that Irena wouldn't like that and he really did want Thor to be a part of this, he really did.

"No Thor, your hammer is too big and powerful and it would cause more damage than good." He tried to say.

Unfortunately, Thor completely misunderstood what he meant because of course he did.

"You think my hammer unworthy of this task? Perhaps I think you unworthy of courting my little sister anymore!" He yelled loudly.

He saw that both Clint and Steve were now staring at Thor like 'did you just really seriously say that?' The temperature of the room suddenly dropped a few degrees. He felt the bond flare to life. He felt his anger steadily rising at what Thor said. He couldn't believe he had the gall to say such a thing. He would teach Thor respect one way or another. Lightning fast, he dropped the tool he had in his hand and was on his feet. Before Thor could even blink, he had opened a portal and magically commanded the cloak to push him into it. The cloak even waved one of its ends as he fell in. Thor didn't even have time to utter a single noise.

He turned and saw that Clint and Steve were looking quiet disturbed at what he just did. He immediately calmed himself down. Steve was the first one brave enough to speak.

"Is…is Thor now stuck in the dark dimension forever?" He inquired worriedly.

He chuckled, clearly he freaked out Steve and Clint more than he meant to.

"No Steve, Thor is fine. I merely dropped him a few blocks away. He'll be back soon and hopefully he'll show me more respect now." He chuckled.

He watched as both men let out a relieved sigh.

"Sweet Jesus, Mary and Joseph, please remind me never to get on your bad side!" Clint said, still trying to get over the shock at what he just witnessed.

At this, he let out a full on laugh.

"I don't think you two have anything to worry about." He laughed.

"Good, because I think I get why Irena likes you so much, Merlin. If what you just did was any indication, I know you care deeply for her and will take good care of her. I'm not going to lie; raising a baby is no picnic sometimes. If you need anything at all you know where to go now and I think Steve here agrees with me." Clint said, giving him a brotherly pat on the shoulder.

It took him no time at all to realize that he really and truly just gained Clint and Steve's respect. He knew how big of a thing that really was. He smiled at them.

"Thank you, I really appreciate that." He said sincerely.
They both nodded and then the manly bonding moment was over. They all got back to work. Not long later, Thor managed to find his way back to the Sanctum and he apologized profusely knowing he overstepped his boundaries. He knew that he had gained Thor's respect too, albeit the hard way. After some time, they were nearly done and the room was coming together nicely. Suddenly, he could sense through the bond that Irena's emotions had gone completely sideways for some reason. He had to get to Kamar-Taj before Irena decided to leave on her own effectively accidentally ruining everything that they worked so hard on. He turned to Clint.

"Clint, can I put you in charge? I need to go to Irena before she comes here. Can you three get the rest of this finished before I get back here?" He asked urgently.

Clint nodded.

"Should be no problemo!" Clint replied, saluting him.

After thanking Clint profusely, he wasted no time in opening a portal to Kamar-Taj and jumping into it. When he came out into the library on the other side, he was shocked at the scene that he was witnessing. He could see that Irena was clearly distressed and that Maximus looked very annoyed and angry. Wong was trying to referee the whole situation and it was not going very well. What in god's green earth had happened here? He wasted no time in voicing that question.

"What IS going on in here?" He asked trying to keep his voice level.

Seeing that he was there, Irena took no time at all in approaching him and he immediately opened his arms to her. She nuzzled into his chest and he weaved a hand through her messy tresses. He wasted no time in trying to soothe her anger away.

"It's okay Stephen, I'm grumpy and tired please don't yell at Maximus." She explained.

"I just want to go back home." She mumbled tiredly.

His heart fluttered at her calling the Sanctum 'home'. He loved hearing those sweet words come out of her little mouth. His heart clenched at the fact that he couldn't bring her back there just yet. He thought for a moment and came up with a great idea.

"Sweetheart, I am so sorry I took so long to get here. Would you like to go for a short walk in the park to calm down a bit before going back home?" He suggested.

She thought for a moment and then nodded into his chest.

"I would really like that." She agreed.

"Good." He murmured back to her.

He gave Wong and Maximus a grateful look. Despite the slight hiccup at the end, they did a great job keeping Irena occupied as long as they could. After he did this, he opened a fresh portal and ushered Irena through it. He stepped through it after her and they came out into Central Park on the other side. He instantly felt her mood lighten and breathed a sigh of relief that she was feeling a bit better. They walked through the park for a bit enjoying a companionable silence until Irena stopped suddenly stopped. With a weird look on her face, she pivoted in one direction and then other. He frowned at her sudden change in behavior. What in the world was she doing?

"Sweetheart, are you alright?" He asked half curious and half worried.

She shook out of whatever it was she was in.
"Yeah, I'm fine. I just thought I felt something weird but it's gone now. I must be more tired than I thought." She explained.

He gave her a weird look but dropped whatever just happened. She was right; her senses were probably malfunctioning due to fatigue. They ignored the sudden malfunction of her senses and continued walking down the dirt path that they were on.

**Mordo**

Karl Mordo frowned. That was just too close. His little dragon girl was far too sensitive for her own good. He hid his magical signature well and she still almost detected it anyway. He couldn't help the jolt of jealousy he felt watching her with Strange. Of course she ended up magically bound to Stephen. He was sure that the fates were laughing at him. She was supposed to be with him. His dark eyes slowly traveled down her body and landed on her slightly curved abdomen. He felt his jealousy increase exponentially. She was pregnant with Strange's child too. He could sense the magic pulsing from the child inside of her it was unusually strong. He wanted that magic for himself and he would have it. He also wanted her too and he would have her too. After all, he knew that there were ways that such unbreakable bonds could in fact be broken.

**Stephen**

He watched his little love stifle a yawn and knew it was time to go back. He really hoped Clint came through for him and got the room finished. There was only one way to find out if he did or not.

"Sweetheart, I think it's time we headed back now. What do you think?" He suggested.

She nodded tiredly and rubbed the heel of her palm against her left eye.

"I think you are right." She agreed.

Gently, he curled her hand in his and they slowly walked back to the Sanctum. As they entered the Sanctum, it was immediately clear that she could sense something was off. He knew that she could sense that Steve, Thor and Clint were in the magical building. She gave him a strange look.

"Stephen, just what is going on here?" She asked curiously.

He shrugged at her and feigned innocence.

"I'm not sure, why don't we go find out?" He suggested.

Together, they walked up to the second floor and he could sense her curiosity increased tenfold. She walked down the hallway until she sensed where Clint, Steve and Thor were. Inside the room they had chosen to be the baby's nursery. She gave him a look that he had never witnessed before and he gestured for her to push open the door. She did and the look on her face morphed into something that he would never forget. Her emotions almost brought him to his knees in a very good way. She was so very happy.

As she stepped into the room, Clint, Steve and Thor all yelled "surprise!"

He could sense that they had momentarily stunned her speechless. She looked around the room and so did he. He had to admit that they did a great job finishing up the room. Everything looked perfect. He owed them big time. Suddenly, she came to life and nearly jumped on Clint, Steve and Thor trying to hug them.

"This is by far the best thing that anybody has ever done for me! Thank you so, so much!"
choked trying to hold her tears back.

They all laughed and Clint spoke up.

"Hey don't thank us tootsie roll, thank Stephen." He said truthfully.

She turned back to him and gave him the sweetest look. She ran back to him and jumped onto him effectively knocking him right onto his butt and he couldn't even bring himself to care.

"Thank you so much." She murmured in his ear over and over.

"You are so welcome." He murmured back to her.

Looking down, he saw that the Dragon's Tear was glowing brightly. He knew that this is what true love was all about.

And he would gladly drown it for the rest of his life.
A/N: Hello everybody! So clearly I will be adding more to this story. I cannot thank everybody enough for the feedback. I know now that there are a lot of people enjoying this fic and that makes me so very happy! A special thanks to the two commenters, honestly you two made my day so thank you for that! Now here is more story like promised!

Irena

Dream/Memory

6 year old Irena was currently in the training yard summoning blue butterflies. It was by far her favourite thing she learned to do with her magic so far. She couldn't really learn the magic the older sorcerers did because she was so young but 'Mr. Mordo' and her 'Mother' had taught her a few simple things to do. She enjoyed using her magic very much but she found that when she did, it seemed to attract the attention of a lot of the sorcerers around her and it made her uncomfortable. So, she usually just used it when she was alone or with her 'Mother'. Even her 'Mr. Mordo' seemed to be acting weird around her as of late. She really wished she knew what was going on so she could try to fix it. She hated it so much when people acted funny around her. Suddenly, she was jolted from her thoughts when she sensed that somebody was joining her in the training yard.

Turning around, she saw that Gideon was coming. Gideon was a sorcerer that was about ten years older than her with jet black hair and dark eyes. Normally, he was a pretty nice person to be around. He even fended off bullies for her once or twice. Lately though, something had changed. Just like the other sorcerers around her, he bore an unhealthy interest in her magic and it freaked her out. Right now, he was just standing there watching her produce blue butterflies from her left palm. After a minute or so, he approached her with a smile on his handsome face.

"Hey there, little bit. Those are some pretty nice blue butterflies." He complemented.

She blushed a little bit at the nickname he gave her and the complement too.

"Um...thank you." She said softly.

She wasn't that good at accepting compliments, not very many people gave her them. As she continued to practice summoning butterflies, she sensed a sudden change in Gideon's demeanor and started to feel uneasy. He was very close to her now.

"Are butterflies all you can summon so far?" He asked curiously.

She shook her head at the question.

"No, I can summon bubbles and some small animals." She replied shyly.

"That's cool, could you show me what small animals you can summon?" He pushed.

She shifted uncomfortably; he was becoming far too pushy for her liking and too close for her...
comfort too.

"Um, I think I am going to stop for now, Gideon." She mumbled.

She could sense that Gideon didn't like that answer.

"No, I think I would much rather see more of your magic instead." He stated in a voice that gave her the shivers.

She hesitated; she knew that something seriously wasn't right with this situation.

"I think I am going to stop for now." She reiterated more forcefully.

Saying that only seemed to aggravate Gideon further. His hand clamped tightly onto her shoulder and she let out a surprised squeak at the sudden intrusion of her personal space.

"Gideon, what are you doing?" She squeaked in shock.

Before Gideon had the chance to respond, he was suddenly on his butt a little ways away from her. She looked at Gideon with shock wondering just how he ended up so far away from her until she whirled around and came face to stomach with Mr. Mordo. She could sense his anger and something else that she couldn't put her finger on but she knew that it wasn't good.

"That will teach you to never try and take what doesn't belong to you, boy!" Mr. Mordo growled lowly.

She didn't understand what Mr. Mordo meant by that but it caused a jolt of fear to run through her system. Just what did he mean by that? She didn't have time ponder it too much because Gideon got on his feet quickly and charged at Mr. Mordo. She immediately panicked; there was no way he would win a fight against Mr. Mordo. He was far too strong. They began to fight in earnest and she began to panic. She had to somehow put a stop to it before somebody got really hurt.

"STOP IT!" She yelled.

When neither Mr. Mordo nor Gideon payed any attention to her, she yelled as loudly as she could.

"Stop it, stop it, STOP IT!" She screamed.

Suddenly, she felt something shifting inside of her, her mismatched eyes eclipsed to black and blue energy crackled to life around both her small palms. Before she could even try to stop it, it exploded from her. The blue energy hit both Mr. Mordo and Gideon with such force it caused them to be blown apart from each other. Before she could even begin to understand what just happened to her, everything began to feel hazy and she sild onto the ground into unconsciousness.

End Dream/Memory

Jolting awake, Irena sat up ram-rod straight and gulped in air as she tried hopelessly to regulate her breathing before she accidently woke up Stephen. That was by far the worst and most intense dream-memory she had so far. Her hair was plastered to her sweaty face and she tried to push it out of her eyes. She felt so overheated. As she tried to continue to try and regulate her breathing, she was hit with a huge wave of nausea and tried crawl out of the bed as quickly as she could without disturbing Stephen. Somehow, she managed to pull it off. They had both been sleeping so crappy lately because of her bouts of nausea that she supposed that his need for sleep overrode the bond at the moment. Tiptoeing to the bathroom as quickly as she could, she barely managed to get in front of the toilet and get the seat up before she was sick. After she finished being sick, she washed out her
mouth and slid down onto the ground. She laid there for a moment, still trying to catch her breath. Between the horrible dream that she just had and being sick again, she needed to rest a bit. She finally felt her breathing even out and she began to calm down a little. She was so exhausted that she just needed to rest her eyes for a moment before she tried to get up off of the ground and got back to bed.

**Stephen**

Stephen's stormy blue eyes snapped open, he didn't know why he woke up so suddenly but he could sense that something wasn't quite right. He realized very quickly that Irena was not in bed with him and that set off many alarm bells in his head. He wasted no time getting out of bed; he had an idea of where she would be. He got to the bathroom as quickly as he could and sure enough there she was lying curled up in a little ball on the floor sleeping. Immediately, he went over to her and crouched down in front of her. He caressed her forehead and then her cheek. She was hot and clammy but she didn't feel feverish thankfully. He also caressed her slightly curved belly and he was extremely relieved to feel the little pulse beneath his hand. He determined that she must have gone through a suppressed memory in her dreams. Oh his poor little love. Not only did she have to deal with that but terrible nausea too.

Gently, he picked her up and she automatically snuggled against him. He could feel her positively vibrating against him. He could sense that she was cold. As quickly as he could, he got her into bed and pulled up the covers all around her. He climbed back into bed with her and she wasted no time in wrapping herself around him. She let out a soft sigh and buried her face into his chest. He let out his own sigh, as soon as morning rolled around he would talk to Wong and they would figure out a replacement for the herbs she had been taking for her bouts of nausea before something really bad happened.

**In The Morning**

**Stephen**

Stretching languidly, Stephen opened his eyes and immediately sought out Irena. He was relieved to see that she was sleeping against him soundly. Her face was just about completely buried into his chest and she had a handful of his shirt clenched in one of her small hands. He ran his fingers through her messy head of hair. He could sense that she seemed to enjoy the touch very much. He debated whether or not to just let her sleep while he got up and went to talk to Wong. Watching her for a bit longer, he decided to let her sleep. The only way she would ever feel like herself again is if she slept good and properly. Hopefully when she woke up, she would be up to going to study more with Maximus. Knowing that she really wasn't herself when she tried to study at Kamar-Taj, Maximus brought a bunch of books back for her so she could study from them when she felt like herself again.

Being very careful not to wake her, he managed to wriggle free from the hold she had on him without waking her. This was something he was very thankful for; while he hated leaving her he knew that her sleep was more important right now. Making his way to the bathroom, he stripped and hopped into the shower. After cleaning himself up, he turned the shower off and hopped out. Wrapping a towel around his waist, he made quick work of his five o'clock shadow and combed out his hair. Satisfied with his appearance, he went to go and get dressed. As per usual, he put on his 'sorcerer garb'. Before he left the room, he turned back to Irena and his eyes softened as he looked at her lovingly. She had somehow managed to almost kick off all of the sheets in the short time he went and showered. In doing this, his shirt that she used as pyjamas had ridden up giving him the perfect view of her creamy thighs and her slightly curved tummy. Not to mention her cute little panties too. She was really making it very difficult for him to leave without even knowing it. There was nothing
more he wanted to do than to crawl back into bed with her but he knew that getting her nausea under control was far more important.

He opened his bedroom door and was not shocked when Little Sapphire and he cloak came rushing in the room. They wasted no time in going over to Irena already picking at each other the whole time. He frowned and shook his head. This wouldn't do today, Irena needed her sleep not his cloak and Little Sapphire running amok all over the place.

"Hey knock it off you two!" He hissed.

Both his cloak and Sapphire turned to face him. His cloak gestured as if to say 'Are you seriously blaming all of this on me?' and he rolled his eyes.

"Oh, for goodness sake, I'm not blaming anybody but Irena needs her sleep so could you two please get along for once in your lives. She loves you both equally so knock it off before you wake her up!" He whispered to them.

They both had the decency to look sheepish. They looked at each other and he could sense that they were forming some kind of temporary truce. He breathed a huge sigh of relief.

"Thank you, now you two watch over Irena while I'm gone alright? No more funny business." He ordered softly.

The cloak levitated up to Irena and wrapped around her form protectively. Little Sapphire crawled up to her head and curled up right next to her head. Happy that he got that situation sorted out, he opened the bedroom door and left as quietly as he could. Hopefully, he and Wong would be able to source out something better for her nausea sooner rather than later and he would be able to return to her quickly.

Three Hours Later

Irena

Letting out a long, slow yawn, Irena's mismatched eyes fluttered open. She felt so much better, it was amazing how much better she felt when she slept properly. She tried to stretch but found that couldn't move like she normally would. Waking up more, she realized that Stephen's cloak was all wrapped around her. She also realized that Sapphire was trying to sleep on top of her head again. She was amazed that they weren't fighting. What was up with that? After managing to wriggle free from the cloak a little bit, she sat up and realized that Stephen was nowhere to be found. She though hard for a moment and wondered if he hadn't went to go and find Wong to talk to him about her nausea problem. Knowing that she was fatigued, he must have just decided to let her sleep and left Sapphire and the cloak to watch over her while he was gone. Some days she wondered just what she would do without Stephen. She let out a soft sigh and got out of bed completely.

Now that she was feeling completely like herself again, she wanted start reading all of those books Maximus brought back for her but first she needed to clean herself up. She wasted no time in going to the bathroom she could hop into the shower and the cloak followed her like an obedient puppy. She couldn't help but let out a little giggle. The cloak was taking its mission very seriously. Sapphire on the other hand was still sleeping on Stephen's pillow. She tried to shoo the cloak away so she could shower in peace. It took a moment but she finally convinced it that she wasn't going to drown in the shower. Entering the bathroom, she turned on the shower and stripped. Once the water was the right temperature, she hopped in and began cleaning herself up. She also washed and conditioned her crazy head of hair. Satisfied that she was good and clean, she turned the water off and hopped out of the shower. She wrapped a towel around herself securely and started toweling out her hair. After she
was satisfied with her hair, she brushed her teeth and then left the bathroom all together. The cloak of course was waiting for her; she shook her head in exasperation. She had a feeling that the cloak was going to be glued to her all day until Stephen got back. She shooed it away once more so she could get dressed.

Looking through her clothes, she picked out her 'Guns 'n' Roses' shirt and managed to find a pair of pants that still fit her. She wanted to get as much use out of her clothes as she could before they didn't fit anymore. That was one thing that she still wasn't looking forward too. She found a pair of socks and threw on her 'Doc Martin's'. Satisfied that she looked good enough, she exited the bed room and made her way to the library with the cloak following her of course. It wrapped around her in the cloak equivalent of a hug and she decided to let stay there. She always really liked it when it did that. She entered the library and sure enough Maximus was there waiting for her. He was floating next to a stack of books sitting on the wooden table. He quirked a sliver brow at the cloak and she merely shrugged back. She knew that it was going to be glued to her until Stephen got back no matter what she did.

"So, you finally decided to re-join the living did you?" He snarked.

She rolled her eyes. He was as snarky as ever but his emotions seemed a little off today. She ignored it for the moment though. She wanted to get into those books.

"Har, har, har. I could just go back to bed or do something else instead of learning all of this important stuff you know." She snarked right back.

Maximus rolled his electric green eyes right back at her and gestured for her to sit the chair in front of the books.

"Oh would you just sit down and get to work already?" He ordered with a huff.

While he did in fact order to her sit down, there was no real emotion behind it. She could sense that he was just playing along with her. Making sure that she didn't crush the cloak, she did what she was told and sat down. She wasted no time in bringing one of the books closer to her and cracking it open. She started reading it and discovered that dark dimension was a whole lot more interesting than she first thought. There were a lot of creepy crawlies in that realm that fed off negative emotions. She understood why Maximus was pushing her so hard to expel all of her negative emotions. If she didn't, she would get eaten alive. He was right about that. She wondered if there was another way to combat them. She could produce light energy from her palms to heal. What if she could use it to ward off those baddies? Now there was a question. She looked up ready to voice that question to Maximus. She paused however when she saw that weird look on his face again. What was up with him? She was going to find out now.

"Maximus, you have been acting funny since I started the brain training, what gives?" She asked curiously.

He looked hesitant to tell her anything, like if he did the world would explode or something. He seemed to be really trying to figure out how to word exactly what he wanted to tell her.

"Alright, you deserve to know but you cannot tell your bond mate quit yet. There are some things that he needs to learn on his own. Do you understand?" He asked carefully.

It was her turn to be hesitant, she told Stephen everything. How would she not tell him this?

"I know it will be hard but he will eventually find out on his own when the time is right, I promise you that." He reassured softly.
She knew that this was something that she needed to know, so she nodded for him to continue.

"You've read the books, you know how dark magic was created but what you don't know is that they left a lot of stuff out. The elder guardian who discovered dark magic was my bond-mate, my Cesrine." He started.

She could sense his sadness. He knew that this was going to be extremely hard for him to tell her.

"You are her descendant, like her in almost every way. After the decision was made to seal the dark magic away, it was determined that somebody needed to guard that door. Because Cesrine created the magic in the first place, the task fell upon her shoulders. She guarded that door then, just as you must guard it now." He continued.

"But something went wrong, didn't it?" She asked softly.

His electric green eyes shone with sadness.

"Yes." He murmured softly.

"She became obsessed with the magic behind that door, it changed who she was. It turned her into something else; she was no longer my Cesrine. I had to do something to stop to her before she brought on the destruction of the entire universe. I had to stop her but I couldn't kill her so I sealed her behind that door with it. Not under any circumstance can that door be opened, for I fear it would unleash something unholy now. I locked myself in that book on purpose in hopes that when it came time for you to guard that door, I could ensure that you would never fail in your duties. I refuse to let history repeat itself." He finished.

She looked at him unshed tears in her mismatched eyes.

"I am so so sorry Maximus. I promise you that I won't fail." She said without hesitation.

She thought for a moment, there was still something that was off about this whole thing. How in the crap did Maximus mange to seal Cesrine away without succumbing to the darkness? All of a sudden the light bulb came on and her mismatched eyes became very large. He couldn't have been immune to darkness at one time like Stephen could he? Suddenly, she remembered a passage from the book on magical anomalies that Stephen had been read. It said that there was another sorcerer long ago that was immune to darkness but there was no information on them in the book. It couldn't be Maximus could it? She looked at him with huge eyes and he chuckled softly.

"You little girl, are way too smart for you own good. Just like my Cesrine was." He chuckled.

"I think we have talked quite enough about this particular subject and I believe that it's time to move on for now." He said, effectively dropping the subject.

She made a sound of protestation.

"But I have so many questions!" She exclaimed in protest.

"I know you do little girl, but now is not the time. You know enough for now." He stated, leaving no room for argument.

She pouted and He rolled his electric green eyes at her. She went back to reading her book; she knew that she would get no more out of him now. Form what he was telling her, she and Stephen were really meant to find each other just like her 'mother' told her. All of this was far more complicated then she could have ever realized it was and she still didn't know everything yet! But
she did know that Maximus went through hell to make that Cesrine remained sealed behind that door and she intended to keep it that way. She continued to read up on how the forbidden door and the dark dimension functioned. She would have to ask Maximus at some point whether or not Cesrine ever had the ability to wield white magic. If this was an ability that was unique to only her, then she might have an ace up her sleeve. Before she did that though, she needed to gain more information first.

A Few Hours Later

Irena

Irena shuddered against Stephen; she had no idea why she was doing this. Okay yes, she knew exactly why she was doing what she was doing. She had to get rid of her fear of hospitals somehow. She studied until Stephen got back with Wong, and then decided to ask Stephen if he would take her near a hospital. He agreed readily, she knew that he would do anything he could to help her and now here they were standing in front of the hospital. She tried to control her breathing. She was being assaulted by memory after memory. She tried to shake out of them, that was in the past and this is now. She had Stephen with her now. She knew that Charlie wouldn't want her to spend the rest of her life feeling such fear because of what happened to him. She could feel Stephen running his nose along hers and she could hear him whispering nonsense into her ear. She knew that he was trying to calm her down and it was working. She was still frozen but the memories were starting to fade away.

"That's it sweetheart, let it go." He murmured in her ear.

She calmed even more at the sound of Stephen's voice. She fidgeted restlessly and stared at the building in front of her. At least she was moving now; it was a work in progress. She would have to come back a few more times but she knew that she could do this.

Mordo

Form behind a building, he watched the scene in front of him with disgust. He couldn't get over how Strange seemed to be able to calm Irena with a single touch. He couldn't help the jealousy that coursed through his veins but he hid it very well. She would be his and he would have her child's magic. His eyes darkened just thinking about it. All he had to do was gain her trust again and he knew just how to do it. He would have to be able to hide his signature and change his appearance. It would be hard but he could do it. At some point or another every sorcerer's bill for misusing magic came due and Stephen Strange's bill was far, far overdue.

Irena

Suddenly, Irena could sense that she and Stephen were no longer alone. A little old lady was approaching them. She gave them a kind look. For some reason, she felt familiar. Maybe it was her eyes she didn't know. She couldn't put her finger on it so she let it go for now.

"Hello there, I couldn't help but watch the two of you." She said kindly.

The little old lady turned to her.

"You are lucky to have such a lovely young man to look after you. You hold into him, you hear me. Good ones like him like him don't come along very often." She advised.

The little old lady turned back to Stephen and gave him a tap with her cane.

"And you young man, take good care of her! Special girls like her are one of a kind. Be sure to take good care of her. You never know what the future may bring." She said, her eyes crinkling kindly.
After she said that, the old lady left the way she came. She looked at the place where the old lady was standing in confusion. There was something very weird about what just transpired, where did that old lady even come from? It felt like she just appeared out of nowhere and then left just as quickly. Why was she so interested in the fact that they loved each other? She turned to Stephen who just shrugged at her.

"Sweetheart, she was just a little old lady. I don't think it was anything to worry about." He reassured her.

She made a face but she had more important things to deal with for now. Not only that, but she felt it was time to go back to the Sanctum. She and Stephen needed some alone time. Stephen seemed to agree with her.

"Come on my little love, It's time to get you home." He murmured into her ear.

He gave it a playful nip as he pulled back.

"Mmm, I couldn't agree more." She murmured back.

She was enjoying his attentions thoroughly.

Hand in hand, she and Stephen walked back to the Sanctum completely unaware of the set of dark eyes watching them the entire time.
To Gain Closure for Good and See new things

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hey everybody! I wanted to do something extra nice for everybody for all the awesome feedback I got! So I decided I would post a chapter before work today because I managed to get ready on time for a change. Seriously I have to thank everybody for the comments and Kudos! They've made my entire week so far! Hope you all enjoy this chapter and continue enjoying the story as much you have been ! Thanks so much again!

NOTE: Okay this chapter contains a medical procedure and I am no doctor. All the information I got, I looked up on the internet so if something is wrong my apologies!

Since I haven't haven't added one in forever on here, a quick disclaimer: I own nothing!

At The Tower

Pepper

Pepper let out an annoyed snarl. She just couldn't BELIEVE Tony sometimes! Stephen wanted to do such a sweet thing for Irena. She thought the idea of Stephen putting the nursery together without magic for Irena was incredibly sweet. Of course, Tony decided he would be a total giant jackass about it and send Clint, Thor and Steve there. She knew that he was hoping that either it would make Stephen feel like crap or that confrontation would happen. Luckily, neither of those happened but she decided that Tony should be taught a serious lesson for being such an asshole to Stephen when he was trying to so hard to gain his respect. She stomped all the way to Tony's office ignoring his crazy secretary. She threw open Tony's office door with such force that it accidently smashed against the wall and made him jump in shock. Tony looked at her like she grew a couple of extra heads.

"Geez Pepper, where's the fire?" He asked curiously.

She let out another snarl and stomped up him. With no hesitation, she grabbed his right ear and twisted it. He let out a painful howl.

"Pepper, what the HELL is wrong with you?" He exclaimed in pain.

"What the hell is wrong with me you ask? It's more like what the HELL is wrong with YOU?" She yelled angrily.

He looked at her with confusion written all over his features and that only fueled her anger more. It was clear he had no clue what she was even talking about.

"You sent Steve, Clint and Thor over to the Sanctum to either make Stephen feel like crap about trying to set up that nursery without magic or make a confrontation happen you asshole!" She yelled.

She tightened her hold on his ear and he let out another pain-filled squeal but she could see that he knew what she was talking about now.

"OUCH PEPPER, it was only a bit of fun! Nothing even happened anyway! They actually helped
Merlin finish the job!” He complained.

"I don't care! You are gonna do something to make it up to him or so help me god you will be sporting blue balls for the rest of your natural life!” She hissed.

Hearing that caused Tony's eyes to widen dramatically and he started choking.

"Oh please no not that! I'll do something to make it up to him I promise! Just don't make me go through that!” He pleaded.

Loosening her hold on his ear slightly, she waited to see what he would come up with.

"How about I send him a subscription to the jelly of the month club? That ought to make up for it right?” He suggested lamely.

At Tony's lame suggestion, she re-tightened her hold on his ear causing another squeal of pain to erupt out of him.

"Try again!” She snarled.

"Okay, okay, alright, OKAY! You are going to twist my ear right off!” He yelped.

She rolled her eyes.

"Be thankful it's your freaking ear and not something ELSE!” She hissed back.

Her saying that caused him to let out a high pitched squeak.

"You are going to do something nice for Stephen whether you like it or not and I know what it is. You are going to plan a nice baby shower for Stephen and Irena and you aren't going to ask for anybody's help. Do I make myself clear?” She stated seriously.

He looked at her like he seriously wanted to protest and her grip on his ear re-tightened once more.

"Oh come ON Pepper! How am I supposed to pull that off?” He exclaimed incredulously, desperately trying to dislodge his ear from her fingers.

She looked heavenward for a moment and then pinched the bridge of her nose with her free hand.

"You're Tony Stark! It shouldn't be THAT hard for you to figure out!” She countered, yanking on his ear a little as she spoke each word.

"Okay, okay, OKAY! Just please let go of my ear for the love of god!” He squeaked.

Knowing that Tony was going to do what she wanted now, she let go of his ear. He made a noise of relief and rubbed at it furiously.

"There was that so bad?” She giggled.

It was Tony's turn to roll his eyes. Now that she got what she wanted, she turned to leave but Tony stopped her. As she opened the office do to leave, Tony's arm suddenly came from behind her and slammed the door shut on her. He whirled her around and gave a look that she knew very well.

"Oh hell no, if you think you just get to leave here after that you are dreaming. I think some punishment is in order for that pain you just put me through, don't you think?” He growled playfully.
Pulling her flush up against himself, he waggled his eyebrows at her playfully and she couldn't help the giggle that escaped from her.

At The Hospital

Irena

Irena fidgeted restlessly; currently she was in the hospital in the ultrasound room lying on an examination bed waiting for the doctor to come. Unfortunately, the procedure required her to have a full bladder so the doctor could get a better view of her baby. She was not at all happy about it. Not only was she dealing with that crap, but she was still incredibly nervous about being in a hospital to begin with. With Stephen's help she had gotten a lot better but she still didn't like it at all. She had lost count of how many times they had to come and just stand in front of the hospital until she was desensitized enough to go in. But it worked and here she was. She turned to Stephen and had to hold back a snicker. He was sure enjoying himself snooping around the room. Clearly, he was extremely happy to back some kind of hospital setting regardless of what it was. She watched him pick up a plastic model of a uterus and start to mess around with it. She had to hold back a snort of laughter. Alright, so he might be a tiny bit bored too. Suddenly, she could sense that somebody was coming and it was clear that Stephen could sense it too. He tried to put the plastic uterus back where it came from but in his haste part of it fell off. How he did it, she didn't know but he managed to reassemble it and put it back where he got it before the Doctor came in.

The door swung open and in stepped the doctor. Her mismatched eyes grew wide. The doctor was MALE. Crap, she should have requested a female doctor. She took a moment to 'feel' the doctor out and determined pretty quickly that he was pretty harmless. He was young, probably in his thirties. He had dark hair and dark eyes and a nice smile. She could feel Stephen's protectiveness exploding through the bond and knew that he was not pleased about this development. Immediately, he was next to her near the head of the bed. His right hand started caressing the top of her head. It seemed that the doctor could tell that they were new to this sort of thing. He smiled kindly.

"Hello, my name is Doctor Anderson. I know the first ultrasound can be a little nerve wracking but don't worry it's a completely harmless, relatively fast procedure I promise." He said kindly.

She nodded a little nervously and he smiled back at her. He plucked her medical chart from the little table where all the equipment was. He took a quick look through it presumably to find out a little more about her (she wondered exactly what was even in there considering she hadn't been a hospital in a LONG time) and then placed it back on the small table.

"Okay Irena first things first, I am going to need you to lift your top up so I can see your tummy, alright?" He instructed.

She did as the doctor asked and lifted her top to reveal her slightly curved tummy. She felt another spike of protectiveness come from Stephen. She knew that he didn't like sensing her discomfort.

"You have a very full bladder, very good! We'll get some really good pictures of your baby for sure!" He said approvingly.

'Oh, Stephen.' She thought to herself in exasperation.

The doctor poked and prodded her tummy a bit. She started squirming a little bit and made a face. If he kept that up she was going to pee everywhere! He stopped prodding apparently happy with what he found. She could sense Stephen's protectiveness spike whenever she squirmed. She knew that he didn't like sensing her discomfort.

"You have a very full bladder, very good! We'll get some really good pictures of your baby for sure!" He said approvingly.
Not knowing what to say to that, she just shifted awkwardly and gave a small nod. Oh this was all so uncomfortable.

"Alrightie! Time for the next step, I am going to squirt some gel onto your tummy and then run the ultrasound probe over it and hopefully we will get some good pictures of your baby." He explained to her.

She nodded once more and watched him go and retrieve the gel. She was so not looking forward to this part. Not only would it be cold as hell, but there would be more pushing on her poor tummy and it would make her have to pee even more. The doctor came back with the gel and squirted a bunch on her tummy. It was blue and it was cold. Again, she squirmed a little bit uncomfortably. Sensing her discomfort, Stephen continued to stroke and caress her head. It was doing wonders in keeping her calm and it was also distracting her from her dire need to pee too. The doctor began to run the probe over her tummy and smiled when an image popped up onto the screen of the machine. She was in shock. She was staring at her baby on the screen and it was moving slightly. Stephen was looking at the screen just as intently as she was. The doctor gestured for him to come a little closer and he complied immediately.

"There can you see a bit better now daddy to be?" He asked with a smile.

She could sense that Stephen was just as much in shock as she was. He could do nothing but nod to the doctor. The doctor began to move the probe around and this caused her to squirm a little bit more. Knowing what the matter was right away, the doctor chuckled apologetically.

"Sorry, I know your bladder is very full I'll try to be as careful as I can be. Now, let's take a little look around here." He said, continuing to move the probe around.

She watched the Doctor stare intently at the screen it was clear he was looking for certain things. He continued poke around for bit until he was satisfied with what he saw.

"So, as you both can see on the screen your baby looks pretty darn good. All ten fingers and ten toes. He or She seems to be already exhibiting some movement already which is good. It's seems to me that you are a little more than 12 weeks along though." He started explaining.

Hearing that caused her brows to furrow in worry, that meant she had been pregnant without even knowing it. She thought about all the caffeine she drank and inwardly cringed. That couldn't be good for the baby. Sensing her distress at this news, Stephen was quick to reassure her.

"Sweetheart, it's okay. Being pregnant without even knowing it happens more often than you think. I don't think you drank enough caffeine to seriously harm our little treasure anyway. I know it's hard but try no worry about it alright?" He reassured.

The doctor gave Stephen an interesting look but nodded in agreement.

"Your husband is right. It's extremely common and I highly doubt you drank enough caffeine to harm your baby. Everything should be fine." Doctor Anderson agreed.

She couldn't help the blush that spread all over cheeks and neck at the word 'husband'. She looked at Stephen wondering he didn't correct the doctor and he merely shrugged. She supposed that the term 'bond mate' sort of meant the same thing. Completely unaware of the fact that she and Stephen just about had an entire conversation without him realizing it, the doctor continued on like nothing just even happened.

"Anyway, apart from being a little bit on the smaller end of the spectrum, your baby seems
completely healthy." Doctor Anderson continued with a smile.

At hearing the words 'smaller end of the spectrum', she began to worry again but the doctor was quick to elaborate.

"Not abnormally small, just smaller. Every baby is different, yours just a bit on the smaller side that's all. You are a pretty petite person, so it stands to reason that your baby might be a little bit on the smaller side. Then again, the complete opposite does happen too." He explained

She nodded, she felt much more at ease hearing his explanation.

"Alright, I only have two more things to do and then you are free to go. I'm pretty sure you'll want to use the washroom any time soon." He laughed.

Keeping the probe positioned where he wanted it on her belly, he went to the computer part of the machine and tapped a couple of keys on the keyboard and the sound of printing paper could be heard. She realized that he was printing them a picture of their baby. He plucked the picture from the machine and handed it to her. She and Stephen looked at it. An indescribable feeling jolted through her. She couldn't help but giggle a little bit, it was clear that their baby didn't want its picture taken. Its little hands were covering its little face. She could sense Stephen's emotions they were like nothing that she ever sensed before. He was feeling such elation. This had to be the most amazing moment of her life so far. She could sense that Stephen was feeling the same. The doctor cleared his throat gently, interrupting their moment.

"I have one more thing to do and I think you two are going to like it." He said.

After wiping her belly clean of the blue gel, he put the ultrasound probe away and pulled out something else.

"This is a fetal Doppler." He gestured to the machine in his hand. "I want to check your baby's heart beat."

He turned the machine on and again probed her belly with it. It took a moment but then a faint, fast sound could be heard. She knew that it was her baby's heartbeat. She couldn't help but tear up a little bit listening to it. She could sense that Stephen was getting emotional too. She could feel tears streaming down her face. Stephen gently wiped them away. The doctor smiled.

"Now that is a good, strong heartbeat." He said approvingly.

He let them listen for a bit longer before putting the machine away.

"Well, that's it Irena. Your baby seems strong and healthy so far. You will have to have another ultrasound in your second trimester to check your baby's progress again. You can either make that appointment before you leave or later. It's up to you. You have a good rest of the day the both of you and I'll see you two at your next appointment." He said, bidding them goodbye.

After the doctor left, Stephen helped her off of the bed. She clutched the picture of her little peanut in her left hand protectively. Placing a protective hand on her lower back, Stephen led her from the room and the first thing she did was search out a bathroom. Finding one quite quickly, she handed the ultrasound picture to Stephen and damn near waddled to the bathroom as fast as she could.

Stephen

Watching his little love just about waddle to the bathroom, he couldn't help the snort of laughter that escaped him. He knew that it really wasn't a laughing matter but she just looked too cute. Looking
down at the picture in his hands, he felt an indescribable feeling bubble up inside of him. Their little treasure was perfect in every way. He continued to look at the picture in hands until Irena returned with an extremely satisfied look on her face. He could sense just how much better she felt. She wasted no time cuddling up next to him and looking at the picture with him. Looking down at her, his blue eyes softened. This had honestly been one best moments of his entire life. Gently, he ran his nose along hers and she smiled up at him. He loved feeling her happiness, it was so infectious. Suddenly, he felt a bolt of extreme sadness and looked up wondering where it came from. Christine was standing a ways away from them with a look of extreme sadness on her face. He inwardly sighed. It seemed that he hadn't shut the door completely on that relationship like he thought he had, he had to fix that. He couldn't let Christine be miserable for the rest of her life. That just wouldn't be fair to her considering everything that they've been through together. Irena was his everything now, but he had to help Christine let him go so she could go find hers. He knew that he would have to do something about that but right now, he wanted nothing to ruin this moment. He began to sense that Irena was getting hungry and knew that it was time to leave. Turning away from where Christine was standing, he placed a hand on her back and led her from building.

Since it was a relatively nice day out, they decided to walk back to the sanctum. Halfway there, he noticed something weird. The kind old lady from the other day was sitting on a bus stop bench looking at them with a smile on her face. Well that was interesting; he briefly entertained the idea of them having a little old lady stalker. How dumb did that sound? He shook the idea out of his head and let it go for now. He had more important things to think about like how he was going to handle Christine without upsetting Irena. Normally, he knew that she wouldn't have a problem with it but right now her hormones were somewhere in the neighbourhood of 'pregnant hot mess' and he didn't think it would make her too happy if he told her he wanted to have a coffee with Christine no matter how noble his intentions were. He didn't know what other option he had. He went through so much with Christine and he didn't want to see her suffer. He couldn't get the look she had on her face out of his head. He had to fix it somehow.

He inwardly sighed. He supposed he would try to bring it up after they ate and hope for the best.

**Irena**

Irena made a face. She could sense that something was not quite right with Stephen but let it go for the time being she was so happy and didn't want anything to ruin it. She decided she would question him about it when they ate. They reached the Sanctum and Stephen pushed the door open. Being the gentlemen that he was, he let her enter first. The minute she did, the cloak and Sapphire rushed to greet her. She took the ultrasound picture from Stephen and showed it to them. She could sense their excitement and that made her happy. Sapphire wasted no time in climbing up onto her shoulder and the cloak followed them like an obedient puppy to the kitchen. She put the ultrasound picture onto the fridge so she could frame it later and wasted no time in starting dinner. She decided on fettuccine alfredo, she was having a major craving for pasta. Stephen of course would reach any ingredient that she couldn't reach. He was abnormally quiet, it was clear he was thinking of SOMETHING and it was driving her nuts. As soon as dinner was on the table she would ask him what the deal was because whatever it was, she could sense that it was really bothering him. It took her no time at all to get the pasta boiling and the sauce going. Now that everything was mostly done, Stephen shooed her to the table and decided that he would finish the rest of it himself. She protested but he wouldn't hear of it. She watched him magic the rest of dinner together and then levitated it to the little table. After he finished up, he came and joined her at the table. They ate in a companionable silence but she still felt that something was very off. Halfway through the meal, she couldn't take it anymore and dropped her fork onto her plate.

"Okay, what's up with you? You've been acting weird since we left the examination room." She asked just about dreading the answer.
Stephen looked at her with a look that indicated that he was trying to figure out how to tell her what his problem was without making her mad. For some reason, this just didn't surprise her.

"Sweetheart, this isn't going to be easy for me to explain to you but I am going to try really hard alright? When we left the examination room when the ultrasound was over, I saw Christine and I could feel her sadness it was terrible. I suppose calling her wasn't the best way to give her the closure she needed. You might not like it, but I think it might be a good idea to talk to her face to face. She and I have been through a lot together and I can't in good consciousness leave her to suffer." He tried to explain.

She couldn't help the emotions that ran through her system at Stephen's explanation. He was right; she didn't like it at all. Perhaps, she wouldn't mind so much if her sanity wasn't questionable due to pregnancy hormones.

"So you mean to tell me, that's what you were thinking about the WHOLE time after we got out of the ultrasound?" She asked, trying to keep the hurt and anger out of her voice.

She felt her emotions go haywire, she just couldn't help it. She couldn't even look at him. Deep down, she knew that he hadn't meant it like that. She felt her magic try to activate because of her wayward emotions and in an instant Stephen was kneeling in front of her. He took her small hands in his larger ones.

"Oh sweetheart, I didn't mean it like that at all. I just want her to move on and be happy. Of course I wasn't thinking about that the whole time. I was thinking about how much I love you and our little treasure and how happy I am. I just want her to move on and find somebody that makes her as happy as you make me." He reassured.

After hearing him say that, she felt marginally better but she still didn't like it at all. Gently, he placed a hand on either side of her face and guided her lips to his in a tender kiss full of love. She could feel how strong the love was behind it. Pulling away from him, she let out a soft sigh.

"I understand what you are trying to do. Just don't be too long alright?" She relented.

He gave her a tender look and she could sense how relieved he was. She knew that the last thing he wanted was to make her upset over his. She knew that he was doing the right thing even if she hated it.

"I promise I will try to be as fast as I can." He murmured softly.

She gave him a look of approval and nodded.

"Good." She murmured back to him.

Together they finished dinner and cleaned up their dishes. After they finished, Stephen went to go and text Christine so he could go and meet up with her. She tried to not let it bother her but it was so, so hard. She decided that she would just go and wait for him to finish in the foyer of the Sanctum. She sat down on the couch and waited for him. A few minutes later, he appeared in the foyer and wasted to time in coming to her. He gave her a soft look and sat down next to her. She immediately cuddled into his side.

"Alright, I am going to meet with Christine now. I promise you will be as quick as I can." He reassured her.

She gave him a soft smile.
"I know you will." She mumbled, placing a kiss in his jaw.

She could sense that he didn't want to leave but she knew that it was something that he had to do.

"You should go now; I have the cloak and Sapphire to keep me company." She coaxed.

He nodded and got up. She walked with him to the door and placed another kiss onto his jaw. It caused him to let out a low noise.

"You are making it impossible for me to leave." He groaned lowly.

"It's a gift." She giggled.

He shook his head in exasperation. After a little more lolly-gagging, she and Stephen finally separated and he left the Sanctum.

Sometime Later

Irena was officially losing her mind. Stephen STILL wasn't back and now she was imagining all sorts of scenarios in her head. She was thinking about a bunch of things that she didn't want to be thinking about AT ALL. The scenario at the forefront of her brain was Christine trying to jump Stephen or something of the sort. She knew that it was completely dumb to think of that but she couldn't help it. She was pacing in the foyer. Both Sapphire and the cloak were watching as she went back and forth over and over again. Finally, the cloak wrapped around her arm to stop her before she wore a hole in the ground. It gestured as if to say "Do you really think Master would do such a thing?"

She knew that the cloak was right that she really needed to chill out before she gave herself a damn heart attack or something. She left the foyer with both Sapphire and the cloak following her obediently. She decided to go to the baby's room; she hoped that it would calm her down a little bit. She entered the baby's room and sat down the rocking chair hoping she could calm herself down before she yanked all of her hair out. The cloak wrapped around her and Sapphire crawled into her lap. She rocked back and forth and began to calm down. She felt her eyes begin to grow heavy and decided that nap was in order.

At the Coffee Shop

Stephen

Stephen sighed. It had been more difficult to try and help Christine move on then he anticipated. He answered every question that she asked him and tried to help her understand everything the best he could. He could sense that she was still very upset and probably would be for quite some time but she was beginning to accept it now. She sighed and so did he.

"You learning magic changed everything forever didn't it?" She sighed softly.

He nodded. Actually, that accident completely changed everything and it was probably for better. Christine didn't deserve the way he treated her before that either.

"Yes but I think no matter what either of us did, things were destined to happen the way they did. I'm sorry, Christine." He said truthfully.

She laughed a little tonelessly.

"I know I just really hoped that we could make things work. I guess it wasn't meant to be." She
muttered, rubbing her head.

His eyes softened a fraction at hearing that. He understood where she was coming from when she said that. He was about to open his mouth to speak again but she held up a hand and stopped him.

"I might not like it but I understand it better now. I have never ever seen you look at anybody before the way you look at her. There is no stopping something like that from happening. I can only hope to one day find somebody that looks at me the way you look at her." She said, touching the top of his hand with hers.

He smiled at her and took her hand in his briefly.

"I have no doubt that you will, you are a very special person, Christine." He said smiling at her.

Suddenly, he felt a jolt of emotion from Irena and knew that it was time to get back to her.

"Well, I should be getting back to the Sanctum. Please, please take care of yourself." He told her softly.

She nodded and smiled at him softly.

"I promise you I will. Goodbye, Stephen." She said softly.

"Goodbye, Christine." He said back, just as softly.

He knew that would more than likely be the last time he talked to Christine. He was happy that he was able to give her the closure she needed and now he felt he could move on properly with the next step in his life with Irena by his side. He watched Christine leave the coffee shop and then he did shortly after. He ducked into an alley so he could open a portal. He so didn't feel like walking back to the Sanctum at all. He wasted no time in opening a portal and stepping through it into the foyer of the Sanctum on the other side. He sought out Irena's emotions and realized that she was in the baby's room. He wasted no time in going there. He cracked open the door and the sight before him caused a jolt of emotion to run through his system. Irena was sleeping in the rocking chair with the cloak wrapped around her and sapphire curled up in her lap. She looked so peaceful. Gently, he scooped her up into his arms and carried her to their bedroom. She snuggled into him and let out soft sigh.

"Stephen." She murmured softly.

He looked down at her tenderly. He couldn't help but think that he was entering a new chapter of his life with Irena by his side and their little treasure and he was enjoying every minute of it so far.
Looking at herself in the mirror, Irena wrinkled her freckled nose. She was just about 5 months along in her pregnancy now. While she knew that she looked the way she should at 5 months pregnant, some days she still felt that she was coming to terms with how her body was changing. She let out a soft sigh and caressed her swollen belly. She smiled when she felt the magical pulse beneath her hand. She swore it was getting stronger as the baby grew. The one thing that she really enjoyed about being this far a long was that she could feel her baby moving inside of her now. It was like nothing she ever felt before in her life and she enjoyed it immensely. The only thing she disliked about it was when the baby tried to use her bladder for a trampoline. She hated running to the bathroom so frequently, it drove her nuts but she supposed it was just a normal part of pregnancy. She continued to caress her belly and smiled softly when she felt a small kick underneath her hand. It seemed that her baby was enjoying her ministrations a lot.

Letting out a long soft sigh, she decided that it was time to get ready for the day. Because of her swollen belly, she had been finding it difficult to move around especially when she was lying in bed on her back so her sleep was being interrupted once more but she would take this over night sickness any day of the week. Because she woke up in the night so frequently, Stephen had been letting her sleep in while attended to some of his Sorcerer Supreme duties. For some reason today, her body image was really bothering her and she couldn't figure out what to wear. She supposed her hormones were still a little on the messed up side. Sighing once more, she stood in nothing but her bra and undies and sifted through her clothes in Stephen's wardrobe hoping something would jump out at her. As she did this, she could feel that Stephen was coming to the bedroom possibly because her emotions were fluctuating so much or he thought she was in some kind of trouble because she was taking so long to get ready.

"Probably a little bit from column A and a little bit from column B." She thought to herself.

Sure enough, Stephen entered the bedroom and she could feel him staring at her. She could sense he really like what he saw. He approached her from behind and let his large, warm hands rest on her bare shoulders. He ran his nose along her neck and that caused her to shudder a little bit. She knew that he was trying to calm her fluctuating emotions and it was working wonders.

"Not that I don't like what I am looking at because I do but whatever is the matter sweetheart?" He asked curiously.

She made a face, she tried to find the words to explain to him what she was feeling without saying something along the lines of 'I feel like a giant blimp and I hate myself right now'. She knew that it would upset him if she told him that. Plus, it wasn't as if she actually thought that about herself. She was just having a crappy body image day today.

"Um, I'm having difficulty choosing something to wear today." She tried to explain.
She could sense that he understood the meaning behind her words thankfully. He gave her a tender look.

"Oh my sweet little love, you are beautiful. Don't ever think otherwise." He murmured reassuringly into her ear.

She let out soft noise of contentment.

"Thank you Stephen, I really needed to hear that." She mumbled back to him.

"Anytime, here let me help you." He said, taking a look inside the wardrobe.

He pulled out a pair of very stretchy black leggings and a nice loose fitting maternity top with funky colored flowers all over it. It was clear that he was thinking of her frequent trips to the bathroom when he picked the outfit out and she loved him for it. The leggings were super easy to get on and off. She loved it when he did the thing where he knew exactly what she needed when she needed it. He helped her get into the leggings and get the shirt on. As he smoothed the shirt over her swollen belly, he let his hand rest there for a moment. He caressed her belly tenderly. She loved feeling his emotions whenever he did this; they were filled with so much love. As he continued to caress her belly, she felt a little kick and then a pulse of magic. She could tell the baby seemed to enjoying Stephen's ministrations as much as she was. Suddenly, he stopped his ministrations on her belly and that caused her to pout a little. He chuckled a little bit at the look on her face.

Gently, he forced her to sit on the edge of the bed and she looked at him curiously. For a moment she wondered just what he was up to until he pulled a pair of socks out of the drawers of the wardrobe. He knew that she had been having great difficulty getting her socks on as of late because of being so short and her belly getting in the way so he was going to help her get them on. Could he be any more perfect today? He grabbed the small stool he kept near the bathroom and placed it in front of where she was sitting on the bed. He sat down in front of her and placed one of her feet on his knee. He frowned when he saw just how swollen they had become. She supposed that this was just another awesome part of being pregnant. Gently, he began to massage her small foot and she couldn't help the moan that fell from her lips. God, did that feel really good. She could sense that Stephen was really enjoying how good he was making her feel. He continued his ministrations and they caused her to damn near melt right into the bed. She let her mismatched eyes drift closed. Just as she really started to get lost in the feelings that Stephen created, the song Crazy Train By Ozzy Osbourne started playing from her phone and she let out a low, annoyed groan.

"Oh come on! Why is it always me all the time?" She thought in annoyance.

She knew that ring. When she went to retrieve the rest of her tools all those weeks ago, she also managed to finally talk Tony into giving Bucky a cell phone. It wasn't easy but she managed to pull it off thank god. Now she never had to listen to the Star Spangled Banner song ever again. She tried to suppress a shudder just thinking about it. She rolled a little bit to the right the best that she could considering she was 5 months pregnant and picked her phone up off of the little bedside table.

"This had better be good Bucky, or I swear to god!" She snarled into the phoned.

Bucky's deep laugh filtered through the phone.

"Oh doll face, don't tell me I interrupted something again!" He joked.

She rolled her mismatched eyes at his stupid joke. He would never let her live that down.

"You didn't interrupt THAT thank you very much! Just a much needed foot rub, what's up?" She
asked curiously.

There was a pause on the other end of the phone and she knew that Bucky was trying to figure out how to tell her something that would more than likely annoy the crap out of her.

"Would it be possible for you to come and take a look at my arm in a bit? Steve and I were training earlier and I think I screwed it up somehow. It's making a bunch of racket and pissing everybody off." He explained.

She pulled the phone from her ear and looked at it with annoyance. Of course Bucky screwed up his arm again. She put the phone back to her ear and focused her attention to Stephen for a moment who as still massaging her feet. She could sense that that he was very curious about what she and Bucky were talking about. She knew that Stephen wouldn't be impressed with her wanting to go to the tower but she couldn't in good consciousness leave Bucky to walk around with a screwed up arm. Hopefully, it wouldn't be THAT hard to convince him to let her go. He would want to come with her and that was fine by her. She needed an assistant anyway.

"Sure Bucky, just give me like an hour and I'll be right over to take a look at it." She replied.

As soon as the words came out of her mouth, she felt Stephen stiffen and his emotions go completely haywire. She knew that was going to happen, she gave him a reassuring look and took his large in her smaller unoccupied one. That seemed to calm him down a bit.

"Sounds good doll face, see you in a bit!" He told her and then hung up the phone before she could reply.

She looked at the phone and rolled her eyes. She hated it when he did that crap. She put her phone back on the night table and turned her attention back to Stephen who looked very unhappy with her. She could just feel the protectiveness oozing from him.

"Sweetheart, I don't think it's such a good idea for you to go anywhere right now." He murmured, stroking the side of her small hand.

She gave him a soft look.

"Stephen, everything will be fine, I promise you. I can't just leave Bucky with a screwed up arm it's not fair to him or anybody at that tower for that matter." She coaxed.

He let out a long sigh; she could sense that he knew that she was right.

"Alright, you win. We'll go but we fix his arm and then come straight back." He said in a voice that left no room for argument.

She fought the urge to frown at him, well there went going to see Darcy for a bit after she finished. She supposed it was better than not going at all. She understood why Stephen felt the need to be so protective of her but soon she wouldn't even be able to pee without him at the rate he was going.

"Fair enough." She agreed.

After he finished helping her get her socks on, he helped her to get off of the bed. She found a pair of flats she got when she was with Darcy and slipped them on. Together they left their bedroom and went down to the 'practice room' to go and retrieve some of her tools. After she picked out her required tools, they left the 'practice room' and went to the foyer of the Sanctum so she or Stephen could open a portal. She kind of wanted to do it to make sure her magic hadn't gotten too rusty on her.
"Hey Stephen, do you mind if I open the portal? I want to make sure that my magic doesn't get too rusty." She explained.

Stephen let out a chuckle and then he nodded affectionately at her.

"Sure, sweetheart." He agreed with a chuckle.

She began making the hand movements to open a portal and then something really weird happened. As she felt her magic activate, she suddenly felt a sharp pain in her lower-abdomen and froze. Just what in the hell was that? She looked at Stephen with large eyes. She knew that Stephen could sense her pain.

"Just what in the hell WAS that?" She wondered.

Stephen looked just as worried.

"I don't know sweetheart, but maybe you should just stay here and fix Bucky's arm at another time?" He suggested.

She sighed, she understood where he was coming from but it wasn't a good idea to leave Bucky's arm broken. It could do serious permanent damage to it that she couldn't fix. She let herself breath for a moment and decided that she felt okay. Whatever it was that happened was long gone now.

"Stephen please, I can't just leave Bucky with his arm all screwed up. I might not be able to fix it later. I think I will be okay if you open up the portal instead." She pleaded.

Stephen gave her a look but relented.

"Alright sweetheart, but the minute something feels off again we come back here. Do you understand?" He stated seriously.

She nodded in agreement.

"Fair enough." She agreed.

She watched Stephen make the required hand movements to open a portal. The orange portal materialized in front of them and Stephen stepped into first. She stepped into it after him and thankfully she came out on the other side into the tower lobby and everything felt normal. She felt no pain coming through the portal at all. Of course Stephen had to give her a once over just to be sure. As he finished, Pepper came into the lobby with a look on her face that she didn't know how to decipher.

"Pepper! Is everything okay? Tony didn't blow himself up did he?" She asked worriedly.

Pepper laughed.

"No honey, Tony didn't blow himself up I promise. He just wants to talk to you and Stephen quickly before you go look at Bucky's arm that's all." She explained.

She gave Pepper a look. She thought it was a little weird that Tony suddenly wanted to talk to them but then again Tony never did anything normally to begin with.

"Okay sure, we'll go and talk to him. Where is he?" She asked Pepper curiously.

Pepper smiled at her and Stephen.
"I think he might be in the lounge. I think I'll come with you two I need to talk to him anyway." She said happily.

She sensed that Pepper was extremely happy about something. Not that Pepper being extremely happy was abnormal or anything but this was like knocking back 10 espresso shots happy. Looking at each other curiously, she and Stephen followed Pepper to the lounge. Pepper threw open the doors and her entire family jumped out and yelled "SURPRISE!"

She jumped a little bit and thanked her lucky stars that she didn't have to pee otherwise she would have been standing in a puddle. She looked around the room in shock. It had been decorated with baby themes. She could sense that Stephen was just as shocked as she was. She turned to Pepper and gave her a huge hug.

"Oh my god Pepper! This is amazing, thank you so much!" She exclaimed.

Pepper snickered and giggled.

"Don't thank me, thank Tony! He put it all together for you!" She giggled.

She looked at Pepper in shock, she could sense that Pepper was in fact telling the truth. She turned to find Tony standing in the middle of the room with his arms crossed and a smug look on his face. She ran up to him and hugged him as hard as she could.

"Tony, you are really the best dad a girl could ask for! Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!" She exclaimed excitedly

"Of course I'm the best dad ever." He preened.

She rolled her eyes and gave his chest a playful slap.

"Okay Tony, don't let that head of yours get too inflated now." She joked.

After thanking Tony one more time, she went to go find Darcy, Natasha and Wanda so she could catch up with them. She also saw a giant buffet table with a buttload of food on it that had her name on it too that she had to check out. As she did that, she watch Tony approach Stephen and have a real actual conversation with him. Her eyes softened at the sight, it was so nice to see them getting along so much better.

After she retrieved a plate of food, she went and sat with Darcy, Natasha and Wanda. She could feel the curiosity just dripping from them and knew that she would have to answer a bunch of questions about being pregnant and what different things were like. It was fine until Natasha and Wanda started asking what her sex life was like. She started turning red up to her hairline, god they were the most embarrassing big sisters ever!

"So, how does it work?" Natasha asked curiously.

She could sense that she was genuinely curious about the whole thing.

"Like it usually does! There are other positions besides missionary. I would think you of all people would know that, Natasha!" She snorted.

Natasha laughed.

"I realize that, but how is it at all comfortable with that much stomach?" Natasha asked again.
She fought the urge to roll her eyes. Natasha was such ridiculously blunt person all the time. Suddenly, somebody yelled for her over the music and she was extremely grateful for the interruption.

"Oi Preggo! Why don't you come over here and open your gifts!" Tony yelled.

She fought the urge to shake her head, it was clear that he found his way into the alcohol that much was certain.

After she managed to pry herself from the chair she was sitting in with Darcy and Natasha’s help, she walked over to the couch and had Stephen help her to sit onto the couch. She frowned when she literally sank into it. She sincerely hoped that she didn’t have to pee any time soon. Oh well. Just like her birthday party, Stephen sat on one side of her and Tony on the other. She looked around and realized that there were gifts everywhere.

"Sweet lord, this kid is going to be SPOILED!" She thought to herself.

Tony started handing her gifts and she started opening them with gusto. She got a bunch if homemade books of coupons from Darcy and Bucky which she absolutely loved. A kind of portable bassinet on wheels from Clint (which he swore by) complete with cute hand knitted blanket inside of it. She just had to ask Clint if he knitted it himself.

"So Clint, did you knit this beautiful blanket yourself?" She asked curiously.

Clint immediately turned fire engine red and started choking in embarrassment. She couldn’t help the giggle that escaped her; Clint was so fun to tease. She had to get him back for all the times he’s messed up her hair on her. She decided to move onto the next gift to save Clint anymore embarrassment. She picked up a couple of packages from Natasha and Wanda and ripped them open carefully. She was happy to see all kinds of baby clothes, lots of cute little onesies and hats. Thor got the baby a plush hammer that was enchanted with Asgardian magic to keep nightmares away that she thought was just too cute. Of course Tony had to be the one to outdo everybody and got her a little red wagon full baby of essentials. She was sure Pepper helped him with that. Finally, Steve approached her with a good size cardboard box. He looked so apprehensive and she could sense that he felt that his gift wasn’t as good as all the others. Oh Steve. Looking at him with softened eyes, she looked inside the box and was pleasantly surprised to see a bunch of vintage baby stuff inside of it. He cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Um, I know it's not as good as all the other stuff you got but I know my ma would have wanted you to have this stuff. It was mine from when I was a baby." He explained softly.

She looked at him with tears in the corners of her eyes.

"Steve, thank you so much! This is beyond perfect!" She said happily.

She could sense Steve’s relief and she knew that she just made him very happy. Considering she couldn’t move very well, she put arms out indicating that she wanted hug and Steve gladly bent down and gave her one. Suddenly, she felt a frisson of something and knew that somebody was coming. Sure enough Sam came in the room and approached her. She was immediately uncomfortable with what she was feeling from him. He smiled at her and handed her a gift bag. She could sense that everybody was on guard around her especially Stephen.

"Here, look I want to try and fix things and be…friends." He explained.

She accepted his explanation and opened the bag. Inside was a cute little outfit.
"Thanks Sam." She smiled.

"Your welcome, say you've gotten…large?" He said awkwardly.

She immediately frowned while everybody else just sort of faceplamed. She could sense that Stephen wanted nothing more than to punch Sam in the face for that remark.

"Um Sam, I am a normal size for being 5 months pregnant thank you very much!" She said, completely annoyed.

"Nothing from that comes from Stephen Strange could ever be considered normal." Sam muttered.

Her mismatched eyes widened in shock. She couldn't BELIEVE he had the gall to say that crap!

"Excuse me, if Stephen's not considered normal then what the hell am I considered?" She snapped back angrily.

As if realizing how badly he just screwed up, Sam put up his hands in surrender started to back away. She kept her hand on Stephen's right thigh so he wouldn't get up and go obliterate Sam. She could sense that he was just seething, everybody was. Steve came forward and stepped in front of her and Stephen with his arms crossed over his chest. She had never seen him look so mad before in all her life.

"I think it would be a good idea if you left now, Sam." Steve said forcefully.

Thankfully Sam seemed to get the message and left the room.

"Oh what a jackass! Be friends my ass!" She snarled in anger.

Tony placed a calming hand on her shoulder.

"Come on kid, don't let him win, it's just not worth it. Let's play a game instead." He suggested.

She relaxed considerably at Tony's touch and nodded.

"Sure, that works for me." She agreed.

Tony got up and went to retrieve a tray with a baby bottle minus the nipple and the part to keep the nipple in place and some dice. This was a game she loved. The dice game, it was a lot of fun to play and could be used at any event. She wondered what kind of prizes Tony chose. Probably all Stark industries stuff or lame things like subscriptions to the 'jelly of the month club', he loved pulling crap like that he thought it was hilarious. They started the game and just as it started getting good, she suddenly had the extreme urge to pee. She felt the baby kicking something that she presumed to be her bladder.

"Stephen! You've to get me out of this couch now before I pee all over it!" She exclaimed loudly.

Immediately, Stephen stopped what he was doing and tried to pry her out of the couch. Her family of course thought it was hilarious and she sensed that they were snickering away the background those assholes. Finally Stephen managed to pop her free from the couch and she ran as fast as she could, oh she would never live it down if she actually peed her pants. She would have to make Stephen go to the Sanctum and get her fresh bottoms. How embarrassing would that be?

Thankfully, she managed to make it there in time. She never felt such relief in all her life, except maybe when she finally got to pee after her first ultrasound. After she finished and cleaned herself
up, she exited the bathroom now happy as a lark. Suddenly, she heard something and she stopped in her tracks. Sam was talking to somebody. She couldn't make out the entire conversation just the words "Slut", "rape" and something about "If she could keep her legs closed". She realized very quickly that Sam was talking to somebody and saying those words about her. How could he say such terrible things about her? Before she even realized what she was doing, she was in front of him. She was so angry. She could feel the magic pulsing through her begging to be released. The strength of it was so frightening. Hell, she could sense the fear just dripping from Sam.

"How dare you say things like that about me Sam Wilson?! Especially about something you know nothing about!" She roared angrily.

She knew that her eyes eclipsed to black and could feel the blue magic crackling around her. It suddenly started enveloping her and then something happened. She felt an extreme pain in her lower abdomen and cried out. What was happening to her? She fell to her knees and clutched at her abdomen. What was happening to her baby? The fear exploded inside of her had just hurt her baby? She could feel herself begin to get lightheaded. Everything was swimming, but she could sense that her family and Stephen were with her now. It was a flurry of activity that she just couldn't make heads or tails of.

"What is happening to me? I'm so scared!" She thought, completely terrified.

She suddenly heard a familiar voice inside of her head.

"Relax my sweet child, I am here for you." The voice murmured.

"Mother! I'm so scared! What's happening to me?" She asked worriedly.

She swore she could feel something stroking her hair back from her face.

"I know you are but you must relax. Everything will be fine, I promise you." The voice murmured softly.

She tried to listen to the voice of her 'Mother' and just let the darkness take her but she was still so terrified for her herself and for her baby. What was happening to her magic?
A/N: Surprise! I thought I would gift everybody with part two of the chapter I put out earlier! Thank you all once again for the comments and kudos I can't saying that enough and please don't hesitate to keep that awesome stuff up! Hope you all enjoy this and happy reading everybody!

Stephen

As he was about to take his turn in the dice game, Stephen suddenly felt a spike of extreme anger coming from Irena and he was immediately worried. He could sense that something wasn't quite right. Dropping the dice on the tray, he got up and left the room without looking back. Exiting the lounge, he went to go find Irena before something really bad happened. He entered the foyer and heard Sam talking to somebody. He couldn't hear all of the conversation just bits and pieces but what he could hear horrified him. He could make out the words "whore" and "slut" and instantly he knew that Sam was talking about Irena in that way. He could feel the bond exploding to life and the need to protect her almost overwhelmed him. He was shocked to see Irena dart from the bathroom at top speed. She was moving at a speed that he didn't even know a tiny woman as pregnant as she was could move at. She was in front of Sam before he could blink and the blue magic was just crackling around her from, the anger dripping from her was like nothing he had ever felt before. He knew things were about to get very messy, very fast.

He had to stop her before she either accidentally hurt herself or their little treasure. He knew that she would never ever forgive herself if something happened to their little treasure. He wasted no time in running to her.

"Irena!" He yelled.

Unfortunately, she was so lost in her anger and her magic that his voice didn't even register with her. Before he could reach her, she tried to release the built up magic within her but as she did so something abnormal happened. He heard her yell and then she collapsed clutching at her swollen belly. He could feel her pain. He could sense that she was fading and his worry increased exponentially. Just as he reached her, he could sense that she had passed out. He wasted no time in crouching in front of her. He immediately checked for a pulse and was extremely relieved to feel a faint one. Next he let his hand caress her swollen belly and felt even more relief when he felt the magical pulse he loved so much. It was punctuated by a small kick and he let out a breath that he didn't even realize he was holding. Knowing that both Irena and their little treasure were okay, he turned back around to face Sam and the bond exploded to life once more. He was determined to make sure that the threat to Irena and his unborn child was eliminated for good. Just as he was about to fire off a spell at Sam, something grabbed onto him and he tried to shake it off. He continued to growl and snarl and fight off whatever it was holding him back but no matter what he did he just could not free himself.

Tony

Watching Merlin's retreating from, he fought the urge to snicker a little bit. Even the slightest blip in the force sent him running to Irena. Well seeing as Merlin was going to be gone for who knew how
long, he decided that he would take his turn. Just as he was about to roll the dice, he felt something familiar. He knew exactly what it was too. That feeling that everything gets somehow electrically charged whenever Irena lost control of her powers. He realized instantly that something wasn't right. He dropped the dice into the tray with a clatter and wasted no time in leaving the lounge. Of course everybody followed him to see what the matter was. He couldn't believe the sight that greeted him. Irena was passed out on the ground and Merlin looked ready to fry birdie boy extra crispy. He realized very quickly that Merlin was 'hulking out'. Shit, this was very bad! Immediately, he jumped into action.

"Legolas, Grease-lighting, we have to stop Merlin before he fries birdie boy extra crispy!" He ordered.

Instantly, Legolas and Grease-lighting jumped into action. They each grabbed into him effectively hindering his ability to cast spells and he tried desperately to get Merlin to focus on him instead of birdie boy. While he did this, Pepper and the girls looked after Irena.

"Come on Merlin! Focus on me and forget birdie boy!" He yelled.

Nothing he did was working at all. Merlin continued to snarl and growl in the grip of Legolas and Grease-lighting. He inwardly sighed; he couldn't believe what he was going to do but desperate times call for desperate measures. He had to do something to stop Merlin from 'hulking out' even if that meant that he had to be serious for once.

"Stephen, look at me!" He tried again.

Hearing his given name seem to help a bit, Stephen looked at him but was still unable to fully understand what was going on it was a start in the right direction though. With both of his hands in the surrender position, he approached Stephen carefully and slowly. He was still struggling but his focus seemed more on him now than Sam thankfully.

"Stephen, you have to put the bond away right now. I know you think that you are protecting Irena but murdering Sam won't solve anything. Irena needs you and your baby needs you. How can you be there for them with murder hanging over your head? Believe me I know what it does and you don't want it." He coaxed.

He gestured for Thor and Clint to force him to face Irena passed out cold on the floor.

"Look, they need you now. I know it's hard but you have to let it go." He said soothingly.

He could tell it was finally working and Stephen was finally starting to come back to himself. He was staring at Irena with his face pinched in pain. Knowing that Stephen was mostly back to normal now, he got Steve and Bucky to escort Sam from the building. As he watched Stephen go to Irena, he let out a relieved sigh internally. That was one hell of a crisis averted. Looking around he realized that everybody was now staring at him like he suddenly grew little purple hairs all over his body. He fought the urge to roll his eyes. Great now his reputation was ruined and everybody knew that Tony Stark did in fact have a heart.

**Steve**

Steve felt completely sick to his stomach. He couldn't believe that somebody he considered to be one of his best friends talk to and about his little sister in such a horrible way. He had no idea what to do at all. When he was just thawed and so confused about the new world he was suddenly dropped in, Irena had been there to help him adjust. He didn't know he would have gotten through that period of his life without her but Sam was one of his closest friends, not in the way Bucky was but still very
close and he didn't want to have to choose sides.

He looked at Sam who looked positively stricken. He realized very quickly that something wasn't quite right. He knew that Sam was a lot of things and he knew that Sam was still a little bit jealous of Stephen. He also knew that Sam still had some feelings for Irena but he was trying so hard fix his relationship with her so that they could be friends, not make it worse. He just wasn't the type of guy to say things like that. Sam turned to him and Bucky and gave both of them a pleading look.

"Steve, I was trying to make things better not make them worse I swear. I don't even know what came over me. I got in there with the gift it was like a switch had flipped and something happened to me. I was suddenly so angry at her and I don't even know why!" Sam tried to explain.

Both he and Bucky looked at each other and frowned. Something was definitely not right at all.

"Okay what else did you do today? Anything else out of the ordinary?" He asked seriously.

He watched as Sam tried to think hard.

"Well, I sort of had to psych myself up before I came here so I went for a run in the park. I did a couple of laps in the park. On the second one, I saw a little old lady sitting on a bench. She was staring at me and smiling, like really paying attention to me but I didn't really think much of it." He explained.

Hearing this caused him to frown immediately. Bucky also had a frown on his face too. As of late, Irena had been complaining about this old lady that always seemed to be sitting on a park bench staring at her whenever she was at the park. She kept on saying how much it creeped her out but Stephen didn't seem to think that it was anything to worry about. He wondered if there wasn't something fishy going on. He knew that this was something that he really needed to talk to Stephen about. He gave Sam a reassuring pat on the back.

"Don't worry Sam, we will figure out what is going on, I promise you. Why don't you go back home and try to decompress okay?" He suggested.

Giving him a look of extreme relief, Sam nodded.

"That sounds like a great idea right about now. Please tell Irena I'm sorry okay?" Sam said softly.

He smiled at him and gave his shoulder another reassuring pat.

"Of course I will!" He reassured.

After parting ways with Sam, He and Bucky went back into the tower. He was not shocked to see that Irena was no longer on the floor and assumed that she was moved back into the lounge where she would be more comfortable. Sure enough, he and Bucky entered the lounge and she was lying on the couch still out like a light surrounded by everyone. He could see that Stephen's magical friend Wong was there doing what he assumed to be some kind of magical diagnostic…thing on her. Poor Stephen looked completely distraught not that he could blame him. He walked up to Stephen and put a reassuring hand his shoulder. Bucky also gave him a reassuring pat on the back with his metal arm.

"Don't worry Stephen, Irena is stubborn as hell. This won't keep her down for too long." He told Stephen reassuringly.

Stephen gave both him and Bucky a reassuring look back.

"I know and…thank you, both of you." Stephen said gratefully.
He nodded at Stephen and then looked at Irena. Hopefully, she would wake up sooner rather than later. She had a whole family worried sick about her.

**Stephen**

He couldn't help but continue to look at Steve gratefully. Honestly, having a support system was really going a long way in helping everything right now. As he looked at Steve, he sensed that Steve had something in back of his mind that he wanted to talk to him about. He would ask him about it later though; Irena was his main priority at the moment. He was so worried about her, she was so passed out that he couldn't even feel her through the bond and that didn't sit well with him at all. He felt like he wanted to go mental all over again. Thinking about going mental reminded him of just how much he owed Tony. If it hadn't been for him he would have murdered Sam right on the spot. Tony was right, he wasn't a murderer by any means and there was no way he could live with himself if he had actually murdered Sam. He didn't even know Tony managed to reach him when he was so lost to the bond but he was sure glad that he somehow managed to do it. He owed Tony big time.

Sensing that Wong was finished with his magical diagnosis, he shook himself out his thoughts and gave Wong his complete attention. He could sense Wong's relief and knew instantly that she would be okay and that their little treasure was going to okay, thank god for that. The relief that he was now feeling was indescribable.

"Okay, so first things first, she's going to be fine. She somehow went into some kind of a magical overload hibernation mode. Now, I'm not exactly sure why this happened but I do have a theory. Irena's magic is extremely strong on her own, never mind the baby's magic. I think because her magic is currently bound to the baby's, it's just way too much for her to wield right now. She has enough magic pumping through her system right now that would tear a normal sorcerer apart. Clearly, her body has some kind of built in defense mechanism in case something like this happened and she lost control of it so she and her baby would be protected from it. So, right now all that can be done now is to make her comfortable until she finishes sleeping it off." He explained.

Everybody let out a collective sigh of relief and he did too. He could sense the tension just evaporating from the room. Wong turned to him; he could sense that he had a few more things to explain to him that were more pertinent to him than anybody else.

"Stephen, we are going to have to help her control her magic even more now. She can't do any more magic while she is pregnant or this will keep happening to her and she might stop being able to wake up from it. She isn't going to like it but it's for her own good. Also, I think it would be wise to keep her here until she is fully recovered from this. I think it's just her magic causing this problem but we should be sure." He added.

He nodded in agreement. She was going to hate it but he refused to let this happen again to her. Once was scary enough and staying here while she was sleeping it off was a good idea. He really didn't feel like going anywhere at the moment. He would rather be safe than sorry and monitor her closely for a bit before bringing her back to the Sanctum. Perhaps, they could just stay in her old room until she recovered. As if reading his thoughts, Tony spoke up.

"Hey Merlin, we can bring her up to her old room and she can sleep it off there. It's shouldn't be any problem." Tony said.

He frowned at being called Merlin once more. Oh well, it was nice while it lasted. He nodded in agreement. He could sense that everybody knew the day was done and started filing out of the lounge. He couldn't be more thankful for that. He knew that he had everybody's support but all he wanted to do was be alone with Irena for the time being. Soon, the only people that were left in the room were himself, Wong, Tony, Pepper, Bucky, Darcy and Steve. Wong gave him a reassuring
"If you need anything at all Stephen, don't hesitate to call me back here." Wong said firmly.

He gave Wong a thankful look and thanked him profusely. Wong waved him off and then made the familiar movements to open up a portal. He wasted no time in walking through it and it closed behind him automatically. Steve turned to him and gave him a reassuring look. He gave him a brotherly pat on the back and then decided that it was his turn to take his leave and left the room as well. He had a feeling that he would be seeing more of Steve later though. Tony looked at him with a questioning look on his face.

"Hey Merlin, did you need any help with getting Irena to her room?" Tony questioned him.

He shook his head at the question.

"No, I think I can manage but thank you for the offer." He declined.

Tony nodded.

"No problema Merlin, you just get her to her room. Pepper and I will deal with all this." Tony assured, gesturing to the mess all around them.

Tony and Pepper went off to start dealing with the mess and that just left Bucky and Darcy. He saw that Darcy was sitting with Irena's head in her lap and combing through her dark, messy locks with her right hand. He could sense that something wasn't right was with her and he saw that Bucky realized it too. He could sense that she was extremely upset. Bucky sidled up to her and she rested her head against his metal arm.

"Sweetness, what's wrong?" Bucky asked her softly.

He realized was wrong with her right away, he knew that she and Irena were extremely close but he underestimated just how close they really were. They were truly bonded like sisters and what happened to Irena really upset her. Bucky understood this right away and wound his metal arm around her waist.

"Oh sweetness, Irena is going to be fine there is no need to be all upset." Bucky murmured into her ear.

He saw that she was trying to stop big fat tears from rolling down her cheeks.

"I know but it still scared me. I've never seen her lose control of her magic that before." She confessed.

He could sense her embarrassment at being so scared but there was really no reason to be embarrassed about it. It scared everybody, hell he had been petrified at what happened. He had an idea that he knew would help her a lot.

"Darcy, I can get somebody to notify you when she wakes up so you can come and see her if you want. Will that help at all?" He asked.

She looked at him at with extreme gratefulness.

"Yes please, I would really appreciate that." She said gratefully.

"Good." He said smiling at her.
He watched as Bucky gently coaxed her away from Irena and into a standing position. It took a bit but Bucky finally got her to leave the room. Finally he was alone with her; he wasted no time in crouching down next to her head and pushed her messy hair back from her face. Slowly, he let his hand move from her hair to her face and he caressed her cheek softly.

"Come on, my little troublemaker. It's time to get you into bed good and properly." He murmured softly to her.

Getting up from his crouched position, he gently hoisted her into his arms. He activated his magic a little bit so it would be a lot easier to carry her to her room. He only used a little bit of magic on himself so it shouldn't have any effect on her at all. She was 5 months pregnant after all and knew it would be no cakewalk to get her to her room but he wanted so desperately to be alone with her that this option was the only way to go. He wasted no time in leaving the lounge and getting Irena to her room as quickly as he could. He entered her room and placed her onto the bed. He watched her with affection for a moment as she wriggled around trying to find a comfortable position to sleep in. After she settled a little bit, he went to have a little look around the room to see what she had left behind in this place. He dearly hoped to god that he didn't have to go to the Sanctum and get her anything. He absolutely refused to be parted from her right now. He entered the bathroom and was relieved to come up with some essentials like a toothbrush, toothpaste and hair brush. Clearly, she figured that she might have to use this room again at some point so she left some essentials behind here. His little love was such a smart little cookie. It was one of the many things he adored about her.

Walking back into the bedroom portion of the room, he sat down next to her on the edge of the bed and tried to figure out what he could put on her for pajamas. He wanted her to be nice and comfortable. He didn't want her to have to sleep in her clothes. He knew that nothing she had in here would fit her now. He thought for a moment and then decided on just giving her the undershirt that he wore underneath his dress shirt. He knew that she would be comfortable in that and that way he wouldn't have to leave to go and get her something. He never slept in much besides his underwear anyway.

Just as he began to start undressing her, the doorbell buzzed and he sensed that it was Steve. He felt his protectiveness spike a little bit. He covered Irena up the best he could. Her body was for his eyes only. Once he was satisfied that she was covered up well enough, he opened the door and in stepped Steve. He looked very apprehensive at interrupting his time alone with Irena.

"Look, I'm sorry for interrupting you so soon after all of this happened but I have to tell something important that Sam told me. I know you are still angry at him and rightfully so but you have to hear me out." He pleaded.

He gestured for Steve to continue. Whether he wanted to accept it or not, he knew that Steve was right. When he was in the middle of 'hulking out', he could sense not only fear coming from Sam but extreme remorse too and he knew that nobody who was saying those awful things just to be an asshole would feel that much remorse after saying it.

"I think something is happening to Sam, I don't know what because I don't know how any of this magic stuff works. Sam told me that he went for a run before coming here to try and make up with Irena. He said that as soon as he saw her he suddenly felt so angry at her and he didn't even know why. He told me that while he was running laps in the park he came across an old woman sitting on a park bench just staring at him. Now, I don't know if any of this means anything but I know that Irena was complaining about being creeped out by some old woman sitting on a bench in the park. I just thought you should know about it is all." Steve explained.

He nodded, he agreed with Steve. He didn't know what it was yet but he knew something was off.
He could think of many spells that could change somebody’s personality or that could control them. If the sorcerer was strong enough there even a spell that could be used to turn a person into a sort of ‘giant periscope’ so the caster could ‘see’ things through them. If it fell into the wrong hands, magic could be a very scary thing. He was grateful that Steve came to tell him this information. If something was in fact going on, he would figure it out but right now Irena and their little treasure was his top priority at the moment.

"Steve, thank you for the information, soon as Irena is well again Wong and I will look into it I promise." He reassured.

Accepting his answer, Steve nodded.

"I know it’s hard for you to think so right now but Sam really is a decent human being who just wanted to fix up his relationship with Irena. If something is wrong I want to help." Steve said without hesitation.

He nodded in understanding, he knew that Steve and Sam were close and Steve would want to help figure out what was happening to him if it turned out to be something magical.

"Of course you can." He agreed.

After they finished their conversation, he bid Steve goodnight and Steve left the room. He attention was immediately focused back onto his little love. Taking great care to be very gentle with her, he finished stripping Irena of her clothes so she just in her little panties. Part of him wanted to be very naughty and just leave her like that but he knew that it wouldn’t be fair to her in the state she was in and she would probably get cold staying that way anyway. He wasted no time in stripping down to his underwear. With the same gentleness that he used to strip her of her clothes, he maneuvered the tank top over her head and her arms through the arm holes. He tried to tug it over her belly without disturbing her the best that he could. It was far too large for her and left very little to the imagination but he knew that she would be far more comfortable in it than without it.

Letting out a long sigh, he took a moment to just caress her swollen belly. He felt a jolt of emotion surge through him as he felt a little kick and then a pulse it was if their little treasure was telling him "It's okay daddy, I'm still here." He would never ever get tired of feeling those little pulses and kicks. Letting out a tired sigh, he climbed into bed with her and pulled the covers up around them both.

Whatever was happening, he would figure it out with the help of Wong and Maximus. He refused to let any harm come to Irena or his little treasure. They were his to protect and he would do it for the rest of his natural life.
Chapter Notes

A/N: Hello everybody! Only 3 more chapters to go until I'm caught all up, I think I will put up one more after this to keep you all going until I get home today! Again thanks for a the kudos and comments please, please don't hesitate to keep that stuff up! Thanks again and happy reading!

Stephen

Letting out a low groan, Stephen cracked his eyes open. For a moment he couldn't remember where he was or how he got there until it all came crashing back to him. He shuddered at the memory of Irena losing control of her magic and passing out. He hoped to never have to witness that again. He looked to his left and saw that Irena was curled up into his side sleeping soundly. As per usual, at some point in the night she had tried to kick her sheets off. They were all wrapped around her legs. His undershirt had also ridden up giving him a glorious view of her swollen belly and…other things. Immediately, felt a jolt of arousal and he tried to tamp it down before she felt it over the bond. The last thing she needed was that at the moment. He let out a long, slow sigh and reached out to caress her bare belly. He was desperately craving skin on skin contact at the moment. He felt a strong little kick and then the familiar pulse of magic he loved so much. It seemed that their little treasure was full of energy today. He slid down a little bit so he could rest his head on her chest. He wrapped himself protectively around her small form and continued to caress her swollen belly until he felt himself drifting off to sleep once more.

Sometime Later

Stephen

Opening his eyes slowly, Stephen stretched slowly and languidly. Seeking out Irena, he saw that she was still out like a light but now he could feel her through the bond once more so that was a definite step in the right direction but that didn't stop him from still being very worried about her. Rolling over, he plucked his pants up off of the floor and fished his phone out of his pants pocket. He unlocked it and checked the time and realized that it was late in the afternoon. Irena had already slept most of the day away. He began to get more worried about her; he really hoped that she would wake up soon. Realizing that he had to get up to relieve himself, he made an annoyed noise. He really didn't want to leave Irena's side but he had little choice in the matter. Reluctantly, he detangled himself from her and went to go relieve himself. After he finished, he came about of the bathroom and looked around at all of the clothes strewn around all over the place. He made a face, he hated wearing wrinkly clothes and he was sure that Irena would want a fresh change of clothes too. That meant he would have to separate himself from her and go to the Sanctum to get them fresh clothes or he would have to call Wong over and get him to get them some clothes so he wouldn't have to leave her.

He briefly entertained the idea of Wong bringing clothes to him but then he realized that he would have to go through Irena's underthings and not only did that not sit well with him but he was pretty sure Wong wouldn't be comfortable doing it anyway. He wasn't at all happy about it but he knew that it was the best option he had. He threw on his wrinkly pants and his wrinkly shirt. He held back
a shudder, oh how he hated wrinkles. It took him a moment but he managed to locate his socks and shoes. He threw those on too. He made sure that Irena was still comfortable; he pulled the blankets back up over her and gave her swollen belly a gentle caress as he did so. Satisfied that she was alright, he quickly opened up a portal and walked into it. He came out into the foyer of the Sanctum. He left the portal open and wasted no time in going to his bedroom. He was not at all shocked when he was attacked by the barrage that was his cloak and little Sapphire. He could sense that they were worried about their mistress and wondered where she was but he just didn't have time for them now. He didn't want to leave Irena alone any longer than absolutely necessary. It took a moment but he eventually managed to shoo them away for the time being. He entered his bedroom and retrieved a change of clothes for both himself and Irena. Also, he retrieved a couple of extra toiletries as well. He was not putting up with five o'clock shadow either. Satisfied that he had retrieved everything that he needed, he left the bedroom and went back to the foyer. He entered the portal and popped back out into Irena's bedroom on the other side. The portal closed automatically behind him.

Putting the stuff he had in his hands a side for a moment, he went to check on Irena. She was still sleeping quite soundly but she was moving a lot more. He sensed that she would finally wake up soon.

'Thank god.' He thought to himself with relief.

He decided that while he was waiting for her to wake up that he would start getting himself ready for the day. He could handle the five o'clock shadow and wrinkly clothes no more. He went into Irena's bathroom and stripped out of his clothes. Turning on the shower, he waited for it to get to the right temperature and then hopped in. He washed his hair first and then the rest of himself. He wanted to finish quickly in case Irena woke up and he wasn't there. He had a feeling that when she did finally wake up, it would be messy. He knew despite what Sam said that she would never want to actually hurt him. Also, just before she passed out he felt her emotions and knew that she was petrified that she had hurt their little treasure somehow so he knew that she would more than likely feel a lot of guilt for that too. He sighed, he hoped that when he explained to her that her own body defended her against the onslaught of magic she tried to release it would help her feel better about what happened. He finished up in the shower quickly and turned it off. He stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around his waist. He then got to work on ridding himself of his five o'clock shadow. His hands were a little more shaky than normal due to the stress he was currently under but it wasn't enough to deter him from shaving. Just as he finished making quick work if his five o'clock shadow, he could sense that Irena was finally beginning to wake up.

Immediately, he left the bathroom and got her side as quickly as he could. Her mismatched eyes fluttered open and she tried to pull herself up into a sitting position despite her swollen belly being in the way. He immediately came around the bed to help her.

"Easy, sweetheart." He murmured into her ear.

He watched her take in her surroundings and he sensed that she was starting to piece together what had happened to her. Immediately, he felt her emotions begin to shift and he tried to calm her down because he couldn't have her losing control of her magic again at all. He could sense that the flood gates were going to open up and sure enough she let out a small sob. He immediately started trying to soothe her. He crawled into bed with her towel and all. He wrapped his arms around her and rocked her back and forth.

"I could have hurt our baby, Stephen." She sobbed into his bare chest.

He knew that this was coming; he could feel just how upset she was. It made his heart break open for her. He immediately tried to explain to her what happened hoping it would help her to calm down
"Shh my little love everything is okay and our little treasure is fine. After you lost control of your magic, you went into some kind of magic hibernation mode and it somehow protected you and our baby. I know it's scary and confusing but I promise you we will find out what is happening to your magic." He cooed softly to her.

Hearing this seem to help her calm down a bit thankfully. She nuzzled her face deeper into his bare chest and let out a soft sigh that was punctuated with some hiccups. His hand found its way underneath his undershirt and he began to caress her lower back. He could sense that it helped her feel better immensely.

"I'm so sorry, Stephen." She hiccupped.

Looking at her softly, a tender look formed on his face.

"Shh sweetheart, you have nothing to apologize for." He murmured to her.

He continued to sooth her until she was calm enough her him to explain to her about not doing any more magic while she was pregnant. He knew that this part would be hard for her but he would help her every step of the way.

"Sweetheart, I have to explain something to you that is very important. You aren't going to like it but it's very important that you listen to me carefully, do you understand?" He asked softly.

She gave him a little bit of a worried look (which he expected) and then nodded.

"You already know that your magic is very strong and because your magic is bound to the baby's it is even stronger. As long as your magic remains bonded to the baby's it too much for you to wield so you will have to refrain from using your magic for the remaining time you are pregnant. If you keep on trying to use your magic while you are pregnant you will keep having these episodes and one day you may not wake up from it and I would never forgive myself if I let that happen. I promise you Wong and I will help you to control your magic when you need it." He reassured her.

He could sense that she was upset and didn't like what he told her at all but she understood. He knew that she would do anything to keep their little treasure safe. He watched her let out a sigh and then she started caressing her swollen belly. He couldn't help but give her an affectionate look as she did this.

"Okay Stephen, I understand." She murmured softly.

He gave her a look of approval; he knew how hard this was for her.

"That's my good girl; now that you are awake I believe Darcy would like to see you. Would you like to go see her or would you like me to ask F.R.I.D.A.Y to send her down here to see you?" He asked gently.

He watched her mull his question over in her mind. He could sense that she wasn't quite herself yet so it would probably be better for Darcy to come and see her.

"Um, could Darcy come and see me? I am still feeling kind off." She told him softly.

He gave her an understanding look.

"Of course sweetheart, just let me help you to get cleaned up and then we can call her down,
alright?” He suggested. She nodded in agreement at his suggestion. He helped her off of the bed and helped her to the bathroom. He let her take care of her bodily functions and get cleaned up while he got himself dressed. After she finished cleaning herself up, she popped out of the bathroom in nothing but a towel. He couldn't help but let himself admire her for a moment before he gently got her all dried off and helped get dressed for the day. Again, he picked out a flowy maternity top with little colored lizards all over it and another pair of black stretchy leggings. Because of her bathroom issues she had been living in the black leggings because they were so easy to get on and off. Because it would more than likely take a bit before she felt like herself again, he wanted her to be comfortable and not have to worry about trying to get her pants off when she ran to the bathroom repeatedly. He could tell that she knew that he was thinking that. She gave him an extremely grateful look at his choice of clothing. He gently helped her get the leggings on. This was the most difficult part for her because of her belly so he always helped her to get them on. Next came the shirt, he gently helped her get it over her head and her arms through the holes. Before he smoothed the shirt over her belly, he bent down and kissed it tenderly. He could sense that she really enjoyed the tender gesture and their little treasure seemed to enjoy it too. He felt what felt like little hands more so than feet pushing against the spot where he kissed, he couldn't help the sweet emotion that jolted through him at the feeling. Gently, he smoothed her shirt over her belly. Looking up at her, he saw that she was looking down at him with affection.

This moment had to be right up there with some of the best of his life, Irena and their baby were his entire life and he would whatever it took to make sure they were well protected no matter what.

Two Days Later

Irena

It took two whole days but Irena finally felt normal again. Right after she woke up and realized what happened, she had been so scared that had hurt her and Stephen's baby losing control of her magic like she did. Thankfully, Stephen had been there to explain what happened to her. Honestly, at this point she didn't know what she would do without him. Hearing that she couldn't use her magic while she pregnant anymore had really upset her but she did understand the reasoning behind it. She never wanted to go through an episode like that ever again. Thinking of the episode made her think of Sam, while she was losing control of her magic she could sense that something had been off with him. It was exactly like the first time he came to see her to talk to her and get his wings tuned up. It was like as soon as he saw her, some kind of switch flipped. It was very unnerving. She decided that when they got back to the Sanctum that she would talk to Stephen about it. They had to do some research on what was going on with her powers anyway. Thinking of the Sanctum, she knew that she wanted to leave the tower and go back 'home' now. Stephen had been preforming minor spells around her to see how she would react to magic that wasn't her own and nothing happened. She and Stephen pretty much established that it was her magic being bound the baby's that was causing the problem. She missed the Sanctum's magic and desperately wanted to get back there. Plus Sapphire and The Cloak must be worried sick about her.

Currently, she was curled up on her bed with Stephen. In the last two days, Stephen had been very picky about what she could and could not do. Not that she could blame him after what had happened but it was kind of annoying, he even tried to follow her into the bathroom when she tried to go pee a couple of times. Did he think that she was going to drown in the toilet somehow while she was in there? She sighed; at least he let her see Darcy a few times. That really helped boost her mood and helped her to get better faster. She turned to Stephen and gave him a look like she wanted to ask him a question.
"Hey Stephen, do you think we could go back to Sanctum today? I feel better and I miss the magic humming in the walls." She asked softly.

He gave her a look but nodded. She knew that he could sense that she was back to normal.

"Sure sweetheart but no portals. It's one thing for me to preform minor spells next you but it's another to walk into a portal." He said in a voice that left no room for protesting.

She made a face but nodded. Perhaps a walk would do her some good anyway. Stephen helped her out of the bed and they gathered their things. After making sure they had everything, Stephen led her from the room. Before the left the tower all together, she made sure to say goodbye to everybody. She would either come back at another time to get all of her presents or ask somebody to bring them to the Sanctum for her. She and Stephen left the Tower and started walking back to the Sanctum. Halfway there, she saw a smoothie shop and desperately wanted a smoothie.

"Look Stephen." She tugged on his shirt to get him to look in the direction of the smoothie shop. "Can we stop and get a smoothie?"

For a split second, she honestly thought that he was going to tell her 'no' and so she gave him the best puppy dog eyes she could muster. It took a moment but she finally got him to relent and she couldn't help but giggle at the look on his face.

"Thanks, Stephen." She giggled.

He gave her a look of complete exasperation.

"Why is it I can never tell you 'no'." He said sounding annoyed with himself.

She couldn't help but let out more giggles.

"Let's see, because I'm 5 months pregnant and I'm hungry?" She supplied in between giggles.

He rolled his blue eyes at her and led across the road to the smooth shop. The entered the little shop and realized that it was quite packed full of people. Immediately, Stephen was on guard and gave the stink eye to anyone who even remotely looked at her funny. Oh, Stephen. He wouldn't let anybody near her belly either which she thought was kind of adorable. She didn't mind his protectiveness she thought it was cute. As they waited in line to get a smoothie, a little voice suddenly spoke.

"Baby!" The little voice said.

Turning around, she came face to face with a lady that about 3 months pregnant with a little 2 year old son. She smiled at the little boy and tried to crouch down at his level the best that she could.

"That's right! There's a baby in this belly." She told him pointing to her belly.

The boy let out a peal of laughter and hugged her belly. She thought that he was just the cutest thing ever. She heard somebody clearing their throat above her. With Stephen's help she managed to get herself back into a standing position.

"I'm sorry he is bothering you, he just seems to have a thing for pregnant ladies." The lady laughed.

She laughed too.

"It's no problem! He is just too cute!" She told the lady.

She and the lady continued to make small talk while Stephen entertained the little boy with a couple
of simple magic tricks. It had been awhile since she had felt this relaxed and she was enjoying it immensely until a commotion broke out in front of the store. She looked to see what the problem was and saw that a young girl was yelling at a man to leave her alone. She could immediately sense the poor lady’s embarrassment and realized that this must be the lady’s husband. She immediately felt sorry for her. What was wrong with this douche-noodle? He had a two year old to take care of and baby on the way and he was flirting with random girls? She couldn’t believe what she was witnessing! She 'read' him for a moment and realized that he was one of those men who would never actually cheat on their spouse but had to continue to prove that he hadn't lost his 'touch'. It made her so angry that she immediately felt her magic try to activate but she tamped it down she would not have any harm come to her little peanut. Oh how she wanted to teach that asshole a lesson. She turned to Stephen who was now trying to distract the little boy from the commotion that his father was making. She couldn’t teach the pile of dicks a lesson but he could.

"Stephen, you have to do something! I can't!" She hissed.

Stephen gave her a look of understanding; she knew that he wanted to teach the guy a lesson too. Immediately, she could see that he had a plan formulating in his brain and she knew it was going to be a good one. Stephen made a tiny arm movement and suddenly the man began jumping around like he had ants in his pants. She couldn't help the snort of laughter that escaped her. Stephen changed his hands movements slightly and then the man was suddenly failing his arms every which way. One of his arms started really started going crazy and he accidentally clipped his own junk with it! For a moment, Stephen ceased what he was doing and the man slid down onto the floor grabbing at his crotch with his face pinched in pain. Both the little boy and the lady couldn't stop laughing and neither could she! At the rate she was going, she would end up peeing her pants but it was just so funny. The man regained his composure and he was fuming. He stomped up to the boy and lady with the clear intent of making them leave the little shop. As he opened up his mouth to tell them so, all that came out were animal noises, gross animal noises. She way dying, this was just too much. The little boy pointed to Stephen and yelled. "Again! Again!"

The man turned to Stephen clearly intent on giving him a piece of his mind.

"Hey you, you freak what did you do to me?" He yelled angrily.

Stephen remained completely composed and quirked a brow at the angry man.

"Me? I did nothing, it's not my fault you can't control your own bodily movements." Stephen snickered.

The man let out a growl knowing that he wouldn't win this fight and tried to lead both the lady and the little boy away from the shop, both the lady and the boy waved at her and Stephen as they were led from the shop. She smiled up at Stephen.

"Have I told you how awesome you are lately?" She giggled.

"Well yes, but it never hurts to hear it again." He preened.

She rolled her mismatched eyes at him and gave him a playful slap on the chest.

After finally getting their smoothies they left the shop and walked the rest of the way back to the Sanctum. She could only hope that her life would get mostly back to normal and Stephen's over protectiveness wouldn't go into overdrive.

4 Weeks Later
Irena

Currently, Irena was hiding from Stephen in the bedroom that he had given her when she first came
to the Sanctum. She knew it was childish but she was just so very angry at Stephen right now. For
the last 4 weeks now, he had been driving her nuts with how overprotective he was being! He
barely even let her use a knife any more when she was preparing dinner, not only that but he had
been also spurning any kind of sexual advance she made towards him and it was causing her
hormones to go crazy. It also just made her plain feel like crap, deep down she knew he was doing it
because he was worried about somehow hurting the baby but it was making her feel terrible and
ugly. He of all people should know that it wouldn't hurt the baby; he had been a Doctor after all! She
could sense that he was coming; it was the one thing about being full of magic that she hated. She
couldn't hide anywhere without him finding her, it was so frustrating. Sure enough, he started
knocking at the door.

"Sweetheart, please let me in I need to talk to you!" He pleaded.

She scrunched up her freckled nose, she could feel the tears coming but she tried to hold them back.

"NO! Go away, Stephen!" She yelled back.

She could feel his emotions and they felt terrible. She knew that he felt absolutely horrible for
accidentally hurting her but she was still so angry. She heard him sigh and then she heard some
movement against the door. She knew that he slid against the door onto the ground.

"Oh my sweet little love, I am so, so sorry. I was so intent on keeping our little treasure safe that I
didn't think what it would do to you. Please forgive me." He begged, his voice muffled by the door.

She knew the he was being incredibly sincere but he still hurt her. She sighed; she knew that she
wouldn't be able to ignore him for long when he was begging her like that.

"Okay, you can come in." She murmured.

Immediately, the door magically unlocked and he strided into the room and crouched down in front
of her (she was sitting on the bed). He looked at her with such sad eyes that it made her heart clench.

"Oh sweetheart, I cannot tell you how sorry I am." He murmured softly.

She gave him look like she was contemplating something.

"You don't think I am ugly or huge or anything like that?" She asked him softly.

Taking her small hands in his, he gave her a tender look.

"Of course not, I think you are beautiful. I love you, so, so much." He intoned.

Her mismatched eyes softened. She knew that he was being nothing but sincere. She took his hands
and guided them just where she desperately wanted him to touch her.

"Show me how much you love me." She ordered him gently.

Immediately, she could feel his arousal spike at her words and actions. It was almost overwhelmingly
strong. She knew that this was partly the product of having no contact for 4 weeks but it still it felt
so, so good. He looked at her with darkened eyes and she could see just how aroused he was
becoming from just her actions alone. She loved the sight that he made. She could sense that he
needed it as much as she did.
"Yes." He growled lowly.

She never knew that one word could sound so hot coming from him.
Irena

Irena let out a long contented sigh and caressed her now very swollen belly softly. She smiled softly when she felt a strong kick and the magical pulse she loved so much. She was about 8 months and bit along in her pregnancy now. She would never say it out loud because it would upset Stephen but she felt HUGE. Some days the words 'beached whale' came to mind. But no matter how crappy she felt, Stephen always knew just what to do to make her feel better about herself. Since having that 'talk' all of those months ago, he had been so good to her. He was still very protective of her of course but not so much that it drove her insane. He rarely ever left her side if he could help it and she didn't mind it at all. Unfortunately, it turned out there was more to being the new Sorcerer Supreme than either she or Stephen realized. He had been called to Kamar-Taj to teach a couple of classes. He was not pleased at all about leaving her to go and teach the classes but she managed to convince him that she would be alright. She still had a few weeks to go before the baby came anyway. Besides she didn't mind at all, she was beginning to enjoy coming to Kamar-Taj.

Currently, she was with Wong and Maximus in the library. When Stephen couldn't be with her, he had Wong and Maximus look after her. She didn't mind at all, it beat being alone any day of the week. Besides being as close to her due date as she was, she would rather be around somebody that could help her just in case. Picking out a book from the shelf in front of her, she hoofed her way back to the table and set the book down onto the table in front of her. She tried to sit down into the chair closet to her and get comfortable. If there was one reason why she wanted to have her baby right the crap now, it would be to be able to move normally once again. She continued to try and get comfortable. For some time now, she had been having bad cramps in her lower back. For what she read, it was an indicator that she might go into labor at some point soon but she wasn't worried yet. However, Wong gave her a look.

"Everything okay little sister?" He asked carefully.

She nodded.

"I think so, I just feel a little crampy." She explained.

Wong accepted her explanation.

"Alright, but if you feel anything else please tell me right away." He ordered gently.
She smiled at his concern. He and Maximus took such good care of her when Stephen couldn't be there.

"I promise I will." She assured him.

Wong accepted her answer and went back to the book his was reading. Maximus on the other hand was still staring at her. She didn't quite understand the look on his face.

"Um Maximus, is everything okay over there?" She asked curiously.

Even though he was trying to hide it, she could sense that there was something bothering him immensely and she could tell that he was debating whether or not he even what to tell her what the problem was in the first place. She gave him a look and he sighed.

"Yes, but there is something you should know, little girl. You are the first one with Guardian blood pumping through your veins to conceive naturally." He told her.

She looked at him like he just sprouted a bunch of eyeballs all over his body.

"Excuse me?" She squeaked in shock.

Maximus sighed. She could sense that this was a little embarrassing for him to talk about.

"It was very difficult for Guardians to conceive naturally because of the strength of the magic that ran through their veins so they used a bit of magic to help the process along. They also tended to choose partners of non-magic origins to control the amount of magic the offspring was born with. For one reason or another, your magic seems to be evolving to counteract all of these things and I'm not sure why that is. Perhaps it is the bond you share with your bond-mate I do not know but I thought it was something that you should know." He explained.

She sat there for a moment trying to digest what Maximus just explained to her. Did that mean that she was even more of a freak than she already thought she was? What about her father, why was he able to conceive her? Was her bond to Stephen that strong that was changing the way that her magic functioned? There were so many questions without answers. She decided that the best way to start was to try and find a book on bonds like the one she found in Stephen's study. Maybe she was bonded to Stephen in a different way than she thought she was. It took her a moment but she managed to pop herself out of the chair and waddled back over to one of the shelves of books. As she looked through the books, she could feel Maximus watching her and she could feel his emotions. As of late, he started exhibiting more emotions than 'pompous asshole' and she could sense he was a little worried about how she took what he explained to her even though he would never admit it out loud. She smiled at Maximus.

"I'm okay Maximus, you didn't freak me out too much I promise." She told him laughing out right at the look on his face.

She could sense his embarrassment at being caught and she couldn't help but giggle.

"Well alright then." He mumbled, floating away for the moment.

She started to scan through the books until she felt something…wet dribbling down her legs and soaking through her leggings. Looking down, she realized that she was standing in a small puddle. Did she actually pee herself this time? All of a sudden she felt a sharp pain in her lower abdomen and her eyes became impossibly large. OH. CRAP.

"WONG!" She yelled loudly.
Wong was at her side in an instant, another wave of pain hit her and her hands clamped into his forearms. She let out a painful yell.

"Something isn't right here, this is happening way too fast! What is happening to me?" She shrieked in worry.

She knew that Wong was trying his best to keep her calm but it just wasn't working, this was happening way too fast and she was freaking out.

"It's okay little sister, it looks you are having something known as a precipitous labor. It just means labor is happening hard and fast." He tried to explain to her.

Her mismatched eyes grew large once more and she whimpered as another contraction hit her.

"What! I don't want to have this baby on the floor!" She exclaimed in shock.

Wong continued to try and soothe her and keep her calm.

"I know you don't little sister. Just try to breathe through the contractions and I will get you to the medical ward I promise. " He soothed.

She nodded and tried to stay as calm as she could as Wong led her from the room. He helped her down the hallway as fast as she could go.

**Wong**

Wong couldn't believe what was happening. Why is it that nothing could ever happen normally to Irena? Oh his poor little sister. He continued to help her down the hall way until another contraction hit and they had to stop.

"Oh my god Wong this shit sucks!" She yelled in pain.

"I know, I know! Just keep trying to breath!" He said, trying to get her moving again.

At the rate she was going, if she didn't move fast enough she might have her baby on the floor or in her pants and he knew that it would likely traumatize her and the baby. Not only that, but she would be upset because Stephen missed the birth. He got her moving again, they exited the hallway and then another contraction hit. She let out another pain filled yell.

"Wong at this rate I am going to shit my baby in my pants! I don't want to shit my baby in my pants!" She whimpered.

He tried to soothe her and coaxed her into moving again.

"I promise you that you won't have your baby in your pants I know it's hard but you can't stop moving." He soothed.

She nodded in understanding and tried to keep moving the best she could. He could sense how hard this was for her. She was so scared and she really needed Stephen. Where in the HELL was Maximus? He desperately needed Maximus to go and get Stephen!

"MAXIMUS WHERE ARE YOU?!" He yelled as loudly as he could.

Maximus suddenly popped out of a wall to his right looking quite disturbed and upset. Maximus took in the scene in front of him and the disturbed look on his face only got worse.
"What is…what is this?" He asked in shock.

Wong let out an annoyed noise and rolled his dark eyes.

"What does it look like you moron? Irena went into labor I need you to go find Stephen like NOW!" He ordered loudly.

Maximus nodded and as he was about to take off Irena yelled out once more. She was doubled over in pain. He could sense just how bad it was. Suddenly, he could sense that she was feeling something else. OH NO!

"WONG! Something is…oh my god if I don't get my pants off I am going to have this baby in them. Please for the love of god Wong please help me get my pants off!" She begged.

He couldn't help it; he started to panic a little. He couldn't have her start pushing in the middle of a hallway! He tried to put it away for the simple fact that he was bonded to her in away and he didn't want her feeling his panic it would only make things ten times worse than they already were. He turned and saw that Maximus was still standing in the same spot with his mouth hanging wide open. He kind of looked like he would hurl if he could. He needed Maximus to snap out of it and get his ass moving!

"Oh for shit's sake's Maximus, what are you waiting for? If you don't move now Stephen will miss the birth of his own child! SO MOVE IT ALREADY!" He roared.

This caused Maximus to finally come to life and he ran back into the wall that he just popped out of. He turned back to Irena and despite the fact she was trying desperately get her pants off right in the middle of the hallway he made her keep moving. He needed to distract her from the urge to push. He only hoped that Maximus would find Stephen before she had this baby without him.

Maximus

Maximus could not believe what he just saw. Is that what labor was supposed to be like? That was terrible! He could feel Irena's pain, it was almost unbearable and why did she want to take her pants off in the middle of the hallway? He tried to put that image out of his mind and go find Stephen. Despite what everybody thought, he cared about Irena a lot and he didn't want Stephen to miss the birth of his own child. He went through another wall and held back a shudder. He hated going through walls because it felt so undignified but this was an emergency so he put up with it for now. He went through a couple more walls before he could start to sense Stephen's magical signature. He realized that Stephen was in a classroom teaching a class. He saw that the class was just been let out thank god for small miracles. He burst through the classroom door just as the last of the students left the room. Some of them looked at him weirdly as they left but he didn't have any time for that.

"Stephen you've got to come with me right now! It's Irena she's…and then she tried to take her pants off in the middle of the hallway. Just please come with me right now!" He babbled.

He sounded liked a complete fool but he just couldn't get the words out properly thankfully Stephen seemed to understand what he was trying to say.

"Maximus, you must calm down. Where has Wong taken Irena?" He asked calmly.

He looked at Stephen like he suddenly grew three heads. How can he be so calm in this situation?

"The medical ward! He is taking her to the medical ward. Something is not quite right, it is progressing too fast!" He tried to explain.
Stephen seemed to understand what he was trying to tell him. He supposed it was because he was a doctor at one point. Despite the fact that he seemed calm on the outside, he could sense Stephen's urgent need to get to Irena as soon as possible.

"Alright, take me to her now!" Stephen ordered him urgently.

He wasted no time in complying with Stephen's order and they left the room together. He only hoped he could get Stephen to the medical ward in time.

Irena

Irena felt another contraction hit and let out an agonized yell. All she wanted right now was Stephen to be with her and she had no idea where in the hell he was. Normally she could barely pee without him watching and now he was nowhere to be found. She couldn't help the big fat tears the rolled down her cheeks, she was so scared. She knew that Wong was trying his best to keep her calm. She felt a weird urge like she desperately had to go to the bathroom she knew that was her body telling her it was time to push. She let out a desperate groan.

"Wong, I can't stop it anymore, I have to push!" She groaned desperately.

She could sense that this was not what Wong wanted to hear at all.

"I'm sorry little sister but I can't let you push yet. Just try to breathe through it alright?" He encouraged.

She couldn't help but let out an angry, pain filled scream right next to his ear. This caused him to wince.

"How about you just breath through it while I stick my foot in your ass!" She snarled angrily.

She felt terrible for being a giant bitch to Wong who was only trying to help her so she didn't have her baby on the floor or in her pants but she just couldn't help it right now. Finally, she could see the medical ward and she breathed a sigh of relief. As Wong tried to help into a vacant room, another contraction hit. There was almost no break between them anymore, at this rate she wouldn't make it through this in one piece if it kept up this way. She was in absolute agony and wanted Stephen so badly. Wong helped her onto the bed and she started desperately trying to remove her pants again. The urge to go to the bathroom was almost overwhelming and she knew that there was no holding it back now; she had to start pushing no matter what. Wong seemed to sense this and helped her get her pants and underwear out of the way. He assessed the situation. She didn't even care that she was half naked in front of him and he was essentially her brother for all intents and purposes. She felt like she was dying and he was the only one could get this baby out of her safely!

"Alright little sister, when the next contraction hits I want you to push okay?" He instructed gently.

He didn't have to tell her twice, she wanted this baby out now. As soon as the next contraction hit, she pushed. As she did this, she could finally sense Stephen and knew that he was coming now.

'Finally!' She thought, almost sobbing with relief.

"That's it, just like that!" Wong encouraged.

When Stephen finally came within her line of vision, she couldn't help the sob that escaped her throat.

"Stephen, this is happening way too fast!" She sobbed.
Stephen gave her a tender look and stroked her messy hair out of her sweaty face and tried to calm her down a little. He also wiped away the big fat tears that kept rolling down her cheeks.

"Shhh sweetheart, I know it is. Wong and I will help you through it I promise." He intoned softly.

As another contraction hit, she did as Wong instructed and pushed once more. She let out a long, pain filled groan as she did so. This was so tiring and she felt exhausted. Stephen seemed to able to sense this.

"Sweetheart, I know you are tired but you can't stop now. You have to keep pushing!" He coaxed gently.

'EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, ASSHOLE!' She thought.

She knew that Stephen was right and wasn't actually trying to be an asshole but labor was so hard! Suddenly, Wong spoke jolting her from her thoughts.

"Alright, Stephen I need you to come and take over for me for a moment. The baby is coming now and I need to find something to catch it with!" Wong explained.

Hearing that immediately caused her to panic; she didn't want Wong going anywhere right now!

"What, NO! Wong, please don't go anywhere!" She squeaked in panic.

Stephen gave her a reassuring look; she knew that he understood her panic.

"Shh sweetheart, I was a doctor at one point remember? I can handle this, everything with be okay I promise." He soothed her.

Stephen was right, she needed to try and calm down. She knew that Stephen could in fact handle this.

Stephen went and took Wong's place. He assessed the situation. Precipitous labor was often very messy because the woman's body didn't have the chance to prepare itself for labor properly. Irena was no exception to that rule. Oh his poor little love, why couldn't anything ever go normally for her? He could sense her emotions, she was so scared. He could also feel how fatigued she was becoming too. Hopefully, the really hard part of this would be over soon. The baby's head was almost all the way out. As another contraction hit, he urged her to push as hard as she could. He could feel the strain that this was having on her, the baby had to come out soon or she might go into shock from the whole ordeal and that would be very bad. He managed to maneuver the head out. Where in the fuck was Wong? Why in the fuck was it taking him so long? He never usually even thought of using that word but right now the situation warranted it.

"WONG! What in the fuck is taking you so long?" He yelled.

Again, he normally would never use the word 'fuck' but this situation truly warranted it. Wong finally yelled back to him.

"I'm coming! I can't find anything in this shitty place!" Wong yelled back.

He rolled his eyes. Really, what kind of response was THAT? He lived in this place for shit's sakes!

"REALLY? Now what kind of response is THAT? You live here 75 percent of the time!" He
He could feel how livid Wong was, he could hear Wong swearing like a trucker. So there was in fact a situation that could cause Wong to swear like a trucker and this was it. He realized very quickly that somebody must have taken all of the supplies from this room because it probably wasn’t used very often. Shit, shitty, shit, shit, SHIT! He had to think of a solution fast. Suddenly, the cloak disengaged from him. He had completely forgotten that he even had the cloak on in the first place! The cloak gently maneuvered itself underneath his arms as he continued to gently work the baby free. His eyes softened. He really owed the cloak so much.

'Thank you my friend.' He thought to himself.

He knew one last push would be all it took. As soon another contraction hit, he instructed her to push hard and he managed to get the baby out. The cloak gently cradled itself around the baby. It was a girl, he had a daughter. He was momentarily shocked speechless. He could feel a lump of emotion clogging in his throat. He marveled at how small she was, so tiny. Their little treasure was finally born, their little Charlie. When he and Irena discussed baby names, they decided that they wanted to honor Charlie and decided either Charlotte for a girl or Charles for a boy. Charlie for short.

At this time, Wong finally came back with a bunch of supplies and something to cut the cord with. Wong gave him a congratulatory slap on the back and helped him cut the cord. After the cord was cut, Charlie began to fuss in his arms and knew that it was time to get her to Irena. He made sure that Charlie was wrapped up well in the cloak and went around to Irena's side while Wong continued to clean her up.

He saw that she was passed out cold. Oh his poor little love.

"Sweetheart, you have to wake up. Your daughter wants to meet you." He murmured softly.

He watched her mismatched eyes slowly fluttered opened. She focused on him and the bundle in his arms. She reached her arms out and he gently placed Charlie in her arms. Immediately, Charlie began to stop fussing.

"Oh Stephen, she's perfect." She murmured back to him.

He made a noise of agreement, she was absolutely perfect. He sat back and watched as Irena cooed to her for a moment. He just wanted to enjoy this special moment. He climbed into the bed with Irena and curled himself around her. He gently stroked the top of Charlie's little downy soft head lost in thought. He and Irena hadn't quite picked out a middle name for Charlie yet. Now that they knew that she was a girl, he had an idea that he wanted to voice to Irena.

"Irena, I need to talk to you about something is that alright?" He asked softly.

She smiled and nodded.

"Of course Stephen, you can talk to me about anything." She replied softly, reaching up to stroke the side of his face.

He enjoyed her soft touch immensely. He knew that she could sense that this was an extremely hard thing for him to tell her about.

"Alright, this is something not even Wong or Christine knows about. I had a sister who passed very suddenly when I was 19. She was the whole reason I even went into the medical field in the first place. When she and I were a bit younger, she got injured and I helped her. This is what inspired me to choose a career in the medical field in the first place. I went to straight to college after high school.
On my nineteenth birthday, I came home for vacation. She and I went for a swim. She suffered a cramp and drowned. I couldn't save her and never forgave myself. It changed everything. I ended up getting my medical degree in record time and landing a five year residency at New York Hospital. I forgot about why I took a career in the medical field in the first place, instead I let my success go to my head. Her name was Donna, we hadn't picked a middle name for Charlie yet and I thought it would be a fitting tribute to her." He explained gently.

Irena looked up at him with un-shed tears in her mismatched eyes.

"Stephen, I think it's perfect! It's a perfect tribute to Charlie and Donna!" She agreed happily.

He knew that she could still sense some sadness coming from him at the memories that he just relived. He was so upset with himself that he had forgotten what really mattered and turned into such an asshole. He wanted to do right by Donna; he only hoped that this would be a start in the right direction.

"Stephen, don't be sad. Donna wouldn't want you to be so sad about the past or how things turned out. She would be so proud of the amazing person that you've become. Believe me, I know." She intoned softly.

The jolt of emotion he felt at her words was indescribable. She was right, wherever Donna was now, she would be proud of him and he knew it. He knew that both she and Charlie were always looking out for them and that's the only thing that mattered.
To Defeat the Darkness with the Strongest Light

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hello everybody! I have this chapter and then one more and this story is all caught up! I will be posting the last one in a moment too. As always thank you for a the love that this story is getting and I hope you all enjoy the chapter! :)

Stephen

It had been a full two days since Charlie had been born; everything happened so fast and unexpectedly that it felt like he had no idea whether or not he was coming or going but he was enjoying every moment immensely. He gazed at Charlie sleeping peacefully in the crook of Irena's arm and couldn't help the sweet emotion that bubbled up inside of him. She was so beyond perfect and he just couldn't get enough of her. He could sense that she would be waking up anytime soon and would need to be nursed. That meant he would have to wake up Irena too. He sighed, he felt so terrible for his poor little love. Precipitous labor was often very hard on a woman's body because it happens so hard and fast. Irena was so sore that she could barely even maneuver herself into position to nurse Charlie properly. He would have to talk to Wong and have him make her something to help manage her pain. Because she was nursing Charlie, she had to be so careful what she took but she needed something and he was sure Wong would know what to do.

He sensed that Charlie was beginning to wake up and decided it would be a good idea to check if she needed changing. Because Irena was in so much pain and so tired, he tried do as much as he possibly could so she could get as much sleep as she could in-between feedings. He gently maneuvered her from the crook of Irena's arm (making sure to support her head the whole time) and cradled her in his arms. He couldn't get over how tiny she was. Her size also probably contributed to Irena having a precipitous labour as well. He sighed, despite her small size she was a completely healthy baby girl and that's all that mattered. He watched her tenderly as she blinked her eyes a couple of times and then let out a little gurgle. Even though he knew that she couldn't see him clearly yet, she was still looking up at him. He knew that all babies were born with blue eyes but he secretly hoped hers stayed that way. He carried her to the makeshift change table that he and Wong managed to put together and set her down onto it gently. He and Wong managed to find a small table and cushion it with a lot of blankets.

"Time to change your bum, my little treasure." He cooed to her softly.

He got to work changing her and frowned at how wet she was. Unfortunately, all that they had at the moment was what Wong could scrounge up for them. May different people from many different walks of life called Kamar-Taj home, Wong went to as many of them as he could and managed to put together a grab bag of sorts for them. It had a few onesies, a couple of baby blankets and a lot of cloth diapers which he was beginning to hate. Irena was too. They didn't wick away the moisture from her sensitive skin very well and if they weren't careful about how often they changed her she peed through them. He couldn't believe how many of them they've used in just two days. Because of this problem, she ended up soiling the onesies that were in the 'grab bag' with the cloth diapers. It was a lot easier just having her in a diaper at the moment anyway. She didn't seem to mind plus they had a lot of blankets to keep her warm and the cloak absolutely loved swaddling her. He could sense just how much the cloak loved her already. She was only two days old, this little being that he and
Irena created with their love and he loved her so unconditionally.

He finished cleaning her up; he put a fresh diaper on her and just let himself gaze at her for a moment. She was trying to kick air with her tiny little feet and he bent down and kissed them tenderly. As he did this, he could sense that she was getting hungry and it was time to get her to Irena to be nursed. Gently, he picked her up and cradled her in his arms. She started fussing a little bit and he tried to soothe her. He brought Charlie back over to where Irena was sleeping the sound of her fussing was enough to wake her up. She let out a long, pain-filled groan and tried to sit up the best that she could.

Oh his poor little love, he could feel her discomfort and her fatigue.

"Oh ouch, everything hurts!" She groaned in discomfort.

"I know sweetheart, I'm sorry." He murmured.

Before he could say much else, Charlie really began to fuss loudly. He laughed a little bit and Irena giggled softly.

"I suppose its dinner time." She giggled softly.

He gently placed Charlie in Irena's arms he watched her get comfortable the best she could. He went around and loosened the ties on her hospital type gown. He also tried to re-arrange her pillows to make sitting a little more comfortable. Right now, the hospital gown was the only thing she could wear comfortably for the time being because pants were completely out of the question. He helped her maneuver the gown out of the way. She positioned Charlie just the way she wanted to. It took a moment but she finally got Charlie to latch on.

As he watched Irena nursing Charlie, he was overcome with another jolt of emotion. He knew that she was mentally and physically exhausted. She had circles under her eyes and her hair was a mess but despite all of that she was completely beautiful to him. She was singing to Charlie softly and stroking her little cheek. He went and sat in bed with her. He caressed Charlie's little velvet head.

He sighed he really didn't want to leave his new family but they needed Charlie's stuff from the Sanctum. They couldn't leave Kamar-Taj anytime soon because Irena was still recovering but they couldn't keep going on with what little stuff they had. He thought for a moment and then came up with a great idea. He could send a couple of students to go a retrieve some supplies from the Sanctum. He would still have to leave Irena and Charlie for a little bit but for a lot less longer than if he went to go get the supplies himself. After he went and sent the students on their way, he could go and see Wong on the way back about getting Irena some pain relief. He turned to Irena to voice his suggestion and found that she had fallen back asleep. Her head was leaning against the pillows he used to make her more comfortable. His blue eyes softened and moved her messy hair out of her face.

"Sweetheart." He murmured softly.

Her mismatched eyes fluttered open and she smiled at him softly. He knew that she could sense that he was thinking about something.

"What are you thinking about now?" She asked in mock exasperation.

He made a face and rolled his eyes at her mock exasperation. He supposed that he deserved that. His thoughts did sometimes get him into trouble.

"What do you think about the idea of sending a couple of students to retrieve some supplies from the
Sanctum?" He suggested.

He watched her mismatched eyes light up at the suggestion. He knew that she was as sick of cloth diapers as he was.

"Oh yes please." She agreed to his suggestion wholeheartedly.

He laughed a little bit at her enthusiasm.

"Alright, I will have to leave you and Charlie for a bit to go find a couple of students. I also want to find Wong and see if he can come up with something to manage your pain a bit. Is that alright with you?" He asked seriously.

She nodded and looked intrigued at the prospect of some pain management considering that she was in fact nursing.

"I can get pain management?" She asked curiously.

He couldn't help but laugh a little more at how she asked that question.

"I don't know, I have to ask Wong and find out." He explained.

She nodded again and smiled reassuringly at him.

"If it means I can get some of Charlie's stuff from the Sanctum and pain management you can go; I think Charlie and I will be fine for a bit on our own." She reassured.

He gave her a warm smile and nodded. He bent down and gave her a tender kiss on the lips. He also placed a tender kiss on top of Charlie's head. He reluctantly got up from the bed. He knew that Irena could sense his reluctance to leave. She gave him a soft look and reached out to stroke the side of his face.

He couldn't help but purr at her touch, it always calmed him down.

"Stephen, it's okay. I promise everything will be fine." She giggled softly.

He made a noise of reluctance but forced himself to get out of the bed and he walked to the door way. He absolutely had to leave the room now before he wouldn't be able to. He walked down hallway and decided that he would head to the training grounds. He knew exactly which two students he wanted to task with going to the Sanctum. He had two students in his astral projection class by the name of Kaleb and Kass. They were exceptionally bright plus he knew that he could trust them with this task. They reminded him a lot of Irena and how she got her start in life. They were abandoned at Kamar-Taj by a mother who couldn't take care of them and hoped that by doing this that they could have the life they deserved. Unlike Irena, they got the chance to grow up and learn in Kamar-Taj. Sometimes thinking about what happened to Irena still saddened him greatly, the complete unfairness of it all. He always reminded himself that had things not happened the way they did, he might not have met her. That thought alone sent a jolt of unpleasantness through his system. She and Charlie were his whole entire world; he couldn't be without either of them now.

He shook out of his unpleasant thoughts and entered the training grounds. Sure enough they were there. One of the twins was writing in a book and the other one was trying to practice summoning a portal with a sling ring. He approached them and they immediately jumped to attention. He internally snickered at this a little bit. They were always so eager to please.

"Master Strange, is there anything we can help you with?" Kaleb asked curiously.
He held back a twitch. He was still getting used to being called that instead of 'Doctor Strange'.

He smiled warmly at the twins.

"Yes there is something I need help with. I need the two of you to go to the Sanctum and retrieve some of my daughter's things. Can you do that for me?" He asked.

The twins nodded, he could sense that they were very eager to prove themselves.

"Of course we can, Master Strange!" They replied eagerly and in unison.

He smiled at them.

"Good, I will give you a list of things for you to go and retrieve. Please make sure that you write them all down carefully." He explained to them.

They did as they were told and wrote down everything that he told them. He doubled checked the list and then decided that they were good to go. He gestured for one of them to open a portal and they both looked a little nervous. This was something that they both had a little bit of difficulty with and he could sense their nervousness. He remembered being exactly the same way when he first came to Kamar-Taj to learn the Mystic Arts too. He knew that he had to be patient with them.

"Come on now, this is the perfect time for you two to practice your portals. There will come a time where I won't be there to do everything for you two anymore. Portals are an important part of a good sorcerer's arsenal and you two must learn how to summon them. I know it isn't easy but I have faith in both of you. Now one of you, show me the required hand movements to open a portal." He advised.

It took a moment but Kaleb finally stepped forward and started preforming the required hand movements to open a portal. His movements were a little sloppy so it took a few times but he managed to get the orange portal to appear. He breathed a sigh of relief. Thankfully, he didn't have to drop Kaleb at the top of Mount Everest in order for him to accomplish the task. He inwardly shuddered at that memory.

"Well done, Kaleb!" He praised.

Kaleb looked very proud of himself and he could sense that Kass was very proud of him too.

"Alright now you two get a move on and get that stuff. My daughter is counting on the both of you!" He told them.

They smiled at him and nodded. They wasted no time in entering the portal. He let out another relieved sigh. Now that he had taken care of that, he could go and talk to Wong about figuring out some desperately needed pain relief for his little love.

Outside of the Sanctum

Mordo

Still disguised at the as the old woman, Mordo sat on a bench that was situated not far from the Sanctum and waited patiently. He could sense the magic in the air increase tenfold and knew that something was about to change. Sure enough, an orange portal materialized near the entrance of the Sanctum and two students stumbled out of it. Now he was extremely intrigued, what were two students doing going to the Sanctum in the middle of the day and where were Strange and Irena? He hadn't sensed their magical signatures near the Sanctum in three whole days. He thought for a
moment and then suddenly it dawned on him. When they left, he could sense that the baby's magic had been just about ready to separate from hers and that meant that she had been extremely close to giving birth. She must have given birth while she was at Kamar-Taj with Strange. He must have sent those to students to get some supplies for him. Oh this was just too perfect.

He watched the students bicker for a moment, it was very clear that they had meant to open the portal inside of the Sanctum not in front of it. Watching the two students bicker for a moment longer, he formulated a plan inside of his head. He may be barred from entering Kamar-Taj now but he knew that there were ways to work around that. He watched the two students enter the Sanctum and a malicious grin formed on his face. He would have Irena and her child and Strange would pay for his indiscretions with the Mystic Arts he would make sure of that.

Inside of the Sanctum

**Kaleb**

Kaleb scratched the back of his curly blonde head. He was in the baby's room gathering things and it felt like he had no idea what he was doing and felt completely out of his element. He took a look at the list and then at what he had placed in the portable bassinet he decided that it looked okay to him so far. Kass entered the room with a couple of extra things that Master Strange put on the list. She outright laughed at the look on his face.

"Oh come on Kaleb this isn't rocket science!" She laughed.

He rolled his brown eyes at her.

"Easy for you to say, you're a girl!" He exclaimed.

Kass snorted and took the list from him. She checked it over and then checked what he placed into the portable bassinet. She looked pleasantly surprised.

"Well you should be proud you aren't…" She trailed off suddenly.

He looked at Kass in complete confusion. Her brown eyes went huge and looked completely frozen in fear. What the hell? He whirled around and was shocked to come face to face with Master Mordo who was grinning at him darkly. How did he not sense his magical signature or the darkness emanating from him? Before he could even understand what happening or try to defend his sister, it was far too late for any of that.

Back at Kamar-Taj in the Library

**Stephen**

Stephen was still in the library with Wong and Maximus trying devise some pain relief for Irena. It was taking far longer than he would have liked and his annoyance at the situation was beginning to show. He had been away from Irena and Charlie long enough and was dying to get back to them. He knew that Wong could sense this.

"The more distracted you become the longer this will take. I thought you wanted to help Irena?" Wong asked quirking his brow.

He rolled his eyes.

"Of course I do, but I didn't think it would take three years to do so!" He snarked.
It was Wong's turn to roll his eyes.

"Oh suck it up you big baby! Mixing herbs is a precise and complicated art. I'm almost done." Wong snarked back.

Wong handed him a small pot of salve.

"Here, you can combine this with the salve I've given her to keep the area cleansed it should give her some relief from the pain without interfering with her nursing." Wong instructed him.

He looked at Wong gratefully.

"Thank you my friend." He said gratefully.

Wong merely waved him off and got back to work making more salve for later use. He turned to Maximus who still looked a little green around the gills from witnessing Irena giving birth two days ago. He inwardly shook his head, who would have thought it would be a 4'11" little slip of a woman who would scar him for life and not the Dark Dimension.

'Oh, Maximus.' He thought, inwardly shaking his head.

"Say Maximus, you wouldn't want to come and meet Charlie would you?" He asked curiously.

For a moment it looked like Maximus was seriously debating his question and then as he was about to respond to the question his entire demeanor suddenly shifted. He froze for a moment, his electric green eyes widened and then he came to life.

"Stephen behind you!" He yelled.

He whirled around and was shocked to see Kass standing in the door way without Kaleb. She was rarely ever without Kaleb. He could sense something was terribly wrong. This was Kass in body only, she reeked of possession. She gave him a sickening grin and then she began to perform a series of complicated hand movements at a rate of speed that was impossible for her at her level. Even though it was tainted with darkness, he recognized the magical signature right away. Mordo was possessing Kass! That meant he was also possessing Kaleb too! He must have sent Kaleb to Irena's room. Knew what spell Mordo was forcing Kass to preform, it was a barrier spell! Immediately, he, Wong and Maximus jumped into action to stop Mordo from completing the spell but Mordo was far too fast. He knew that it was because of the dark magic festering inside of him. When a sorcerer fell to darkness they became much stronger very quickly but it came with a terrible price, their sanity. This was not their Mordo anymore at all.

The purple barrier went up and all three of them were trapped and Mordo in Kass' body just stood there watching them panic. It was clear that Mordo was enjoying every moment of it. He tried every spell he could think of to destroy the barrier and nothing worked. He began to sense Irena's fear and Charlie's distress and he couldn’t do a thing about it! His family was in trouble and he could do nothing about it.

Letting out an almighty roar of frustration, he slammed his fists against the barrier.

In Irena's Room

Irena

Irena stretched languidly, everything still hurt like hell but at least felt a little less exhausted and crappy. She looked down and was happy to see that Charlie was still napping soundly against her
chest. She let out a soft sigh and just let herself enjoy the moment. Suddenly, she felt an urge that she hated with the passion of a million burning suns. She to pee and right now peeing was absolute hell. Every time she peed, it felt like she was peeing razorblades she hated it. She let out another sigh, she really didn't want to pee the bed. As carefully as she could, she maneuvered herself out of bed with Charlie in her arms. Once she got out of bed, she gently placed Charlie in the middle of the bed and put pillows all around her so she wouldn't move around too much. Satisfied that Charlie was safe and secure, she grabbed her pot of salve that Wong made for her because toilet paper was out of the question and went to take care of business.

Just as she was finishing up, she sensed that something wasn't quite right. Somebody was in the room alone with Charlie! Suddenly, Charlie began to cry louder than she ever heard her cry before in her two days of life. She ran into the room to see Charlie's stuff in the corner of the room and a male student hovering over Charlie far too closely for her comfort. Her maternal instincts immediately kicked into high gear.

"Hey you! Get away from my daughter!" She yelled.

The student turned around and grinned at her in a way that scared the crap out of her. She knew right away that something was very wrong. She could sense the dark magic just radiating from the student and something very familiar. Her mismatched eyes became large. She could sense Mordo's magical signature coming from the student. She realized very quickly the Mordo had possessed the student. What she going to do? The student laughed in a deep voice that was not his own.

"Oh my little dragon girl, you are way too perceptive and smart for your own good!" He laughed.

She made a face at the nickname; it made her feel dirty for some reason.

"Mordo what in the hell do you think you are doing? Get away from my daughter!" She hissed angrily.

The student's face morphed into a sickening look that would forever be seared into her mind.

"I am taking back what belongs to me and teaching Stephen Strange a lesson that he won't soon forget!" He roared loudly.

She could sense Charlie's distress. She managed to get herself between Charlie and Mordo. Now that her magic was separated from Charlie's she could summon it. She summoned her fans and prepared to fight. Mordo merely laughed at her.

"Are you prepared to deal with the consequences of killing a student to save your daughter, little dragon girl?" He taunted her.

She hesitated, the psychopath was right she couldn't harm the student! What was she going to do? Suddenly, she felt something. A familiar presence, somehow her 'Mother' was here.

'Sweet Child, you are not strong enough to defeat Mordo yet but you can free the student from his hold. You have something that he doesn't have; love and you must use it!' The calm voice instructed inside of her mind.

She knew what her 'Mother' wanted her to do but would it work?

She dismissed her fans and activated the relic hanging around her neck. She thought about every good memory she could. She concentrated on her love her Stephen and her family. She concentrated on her love for Charlie. She also concentrated on everybody's love for her. She felt herself transforming but this time it felt different, stronger somehow. Instead of her wings, claws and eyes
growing straight blue, there was white swirled in with the blue. The pure love pulsing through the relic pushed the transformation even further and she felt horns sprouting on the top of her head.

'That's it! Concentrate has hard as you can! Feel everybody's love pumping through you and use it!' The voice urged inside of her head.

She could feel the love pumping through her, it was almost overwhelming.

"Eat this!" She snarled.

She clapped her hands together and let loose a blinding white pulse of magic. It went right through the student taking the dark magic with it. As the white magic took the dark magic away with it, it let out an almighty screech. The student collapsed to the ground and so did she. The relic started to deactivate slowly and her transformation melted away. What even was that? Was that how strong her magic really was?

'I knew you could do it, my love.' The warm voice murmured inside of her head.

Suddenly, she felt that something was trying to 'push' the voice of her 'Mother' out of her mind and it caused a terrible shudder to run through her.

'You think you've won little dragon girl but I'll be back you can be sure of that! I will have what belongs to me and your precious Stephen Strange will pay for what he has done!' A voice hissed maliciously inside of her mind.

She forced the voice from her mind; she refused to let Mordo scare her ever again. She could feel that the presence of her 'Mother' went back to wherever it came from but she knew that she would always be watching over her. As much as she wanted to go to Charlie first, she had to make sure that the student was still alive. After she did that, she focused all of her attention on Charlie. She picked up Charlie and tried to sooth her. She was crying so loudly, she knew that despite the fact that Charlie was only two days old she had the same magical senses that she and Stephen had. The darkness that had permeated the room had distressed her greatly.

Finally, Charlie began to calm down somewhat and she could feel Stephen coming. Thank god for that. Stephen, Wong and Maximus burst through the door. Wong and Maximus went to take care of the fallen student while Stephen was at her side in an instant.

"Are you okay? My god I was beside myself with fear. Mordo trapped us in the library and I couldn't help you!" He explained.

She could hear the agony and torment in Stephen's voice. She could sense scared he was at the thought of losing her and Charlie.

"Shh Stephen, it's okay, I got rid of Mordo for now, I promise everything is okay." She tried to sooth him.

Charlie was still fussing quite a bit, she gently handed her to Stephen. She could sense that Charlie needed her daddy right now. Sure enough, she calmed right down and started drifting back to sleep. She watched as Stephen cooed to Charlie it made her heart swell with love. She absolutely loved watching Stephen with Charlie; he was so good with her. She could feel just how much he loved her.

"Shh my little treasure, daddy is here." He cooed.

She cuddled into Stephen's side and stroked the side of Charlie's little face. Stephen took his attention
away from Charlie for a moment so he could bend his head slightly and place a tender kiss full of love on her lips.

"You are so amazing, my little love." He intoned softly.

She gave him a warm smile and placed her own kiss full of love on his jaw.

"Mmm, you better believe I am." She giggled softly.

He gave her a curious look.

"How did you manage to separate Mordo from the student? Possession spells are notoriously hard to undo." He asked curiously.

She made a face; she had no idea how to even begin explaining what happened to her to Stephen.

"I'm not sure how to explain it, but I think I used love. I heard my 'mother' in my mind. I couldn't attack the student so I had to do something else. She told me to use love. I guess it powered up my white magic but I'm not too sure. Something felt different though, it almost felt like my white magic combined itself with magic inside of the relic. I let out a huge pulse of magic and it just tore the dark magic from the student. I had to protect Charlie no matter what." She tried to explain.

Stephen looked at her mix of shock and amazement.

"What?" She asked a little unsure.

"You are absolutely amazing." He murmured softly, placing another tender kiss on her lips.

She sighed into the kiss and then parted from him reluctantly. She had to know if the student would be okay. After all, it wasn't his fault any of this happened.

"Will the student be okay?" She asked him softly.

He gave her a tender look and nodded.

"No thanks to you, yes. Wong and Maximus are going to look after him until he wakes up and his sister too." He explained.

She let out a sigh of relief, thank god for that.

Now that everything was starting calming down some, she just wanted things to go back to normal as much as they possibly could. She knew that Mordo would return at some point soon, she knew that it wouldn't be THAT easy to defeat him but she refused to let it scare her. She had something that he would never ever have.

She had love and love was stronger than the darkness would ever be.
To Deal with the Aftermath of Darkness

Chapter Notes

A/N: Okay now this story is officially caught up! I hope you all like it so far and there should be more coming soon! Again I know I say it every chapter but thank you so much for the kudos and everything! If you all could keep that up it would make my year honestly! Happy reading everybody!

Irena

It had been exactly three days since Mordo's attack on Kamar-Taj; for the most part everything had gotten mostly back to some semblance of normal. Unfortunately, the two students that he used so viciously to do his dirty work were weighing heavily on her mind. She had since learned from Wong that their names were Kaleb and Kass and that they were twins. He explained to her that because they were twins that they shared their own unique type of bond and that's how Mordo was able to possess both of them at once. He was quick to reassure her that they would both completely recover from the whole ordeal because she managed to dispel Mordo's dark magic so quickly. In the back of her mind, she still couldn't help but think her magic not being normal was partially responsible for everything. She remembered what Stephen once explained to her about Mordo losing his heart to darkness. Deep down, she knew that Mordo chose to let the darkness fester inside of him and nothing she did or could have done would have changed a damn thing. She let out a long sigh; she had to stop thinking such thoughts before her anxiety drove her insane or Stephen could sense what she was thinking about. She pushed all of the negative thoughts from her mind and focused instead on nursing Charlie. Unfortunately, like always her efforts were completely futile. She heard and felt Stephen let out a soft sigh from somewhere above her head. He ran his nose along hers softly in an effort to try and soothe her some. He was currently all wrapped around her and Charlie protectively.

"You are thinking bad thoughts again, sweetheart." He murmured into her messy hair.

She sighed knowing that he was right.

"I know, I know. I'm sorry I can't help it." She murmured back to him.

It was his turn to let out a soft sigh. She could sense that he was trying to figure out a way to try and help ease some of her anxiety. He thought hard for a moment and then she could tell that he came up with something.

"Would it help you at all if you saw that Kaleb and Kass were okay for yourself? Wong could take you to see them after your checkup is done if you like." He suggested.

Her mismatched eyes lit up his suggestion. It was absolutely perfect! Seeing that the twins were okay for herself and talking to them would go a long way in easing her anxiety. Honestly, some days she wondered just what she would do without Stephen. She loved it when he knew exactly what she needed when she needed it. He was so good to her.

"Yes, that would go such a long way in helping my anxiety. Thank you so much, Stephen!" She told him gratefully.
He gave her tender look and pushed her messy hair out of her face.

"Of course, sweetheart." He murmured softly, pressing a gentle kiss onto her lips.

She felt Stephen's hand come up and stroke her lower back softly. She let out a contented sigh and sunk a little more into him. He continued to watch over her protectively. When she finished nursing Charlie, he separated from her reluctantly and went to go and do the ties on her gown back up. She was still wearing the gown because she was still a little too sore for regular clothes plus it made nursing Charlie so much easier. After he finished tying the ties on her gown back up, he went to go retrieve a receiving blanket and she gave him a grateful look. It was so nice to have Charlie's stuff; it made everything so much easier. She only wished that the two students hadn't ended up possessed by Mordo trying to get it. She held back a sigh; she really hoped that seeing the students would help but her mind at ease. She smiled softly up at Stephen as he placed the receiving blanket just how she liked it. Gently, she maneuvered Charlie so she was resting against her shoulder. She began patting and rubbing her little back softly. As she did this, Stephen came back and curled himself protectively around her. She could sense just how happy he was. She let out a contented sigh, she was so happy to just enjoy such a perfect, quiet moment with him and Charlie.

**Stephen**

Stephen let out a contented sigh, watching Irena with Charlie was fast becoming his favorite thing to do. He adored his little family so very much. He continued to watch Irena burp Charlie and frowned a little when he began to sense that she was becoming a bit fatigued. Between her hard labor and letting loose such a large amount of magic at once, it didn't completely shock him. He also sensed a bit of frustration bleeding through the fatigue. Charlie wasn't burping as easily as Irena hoped she would. He internally chuckled a little bit, she always got like this when something didn't work exactly the way she wanted it too. He thought it was adorable. He gave her an affectionate look.

"Sweetheart, would you like me to take over for a bit?" He suggested softly.

She gave him a grateful smile and nodded softly.

"Could you please?" She murmured gratefully.

Gently, he took Charlie from Irena along with the receiving blanket. He threw the receiving blanket into his shoulder and then he gently maneuvered Charlie so she was resting against his shoulder comfortably. He began patting and rubbing her little back softly. Periodically, he would drop a kiss on her little velvet head. As he continued to rub Charlie's back, he could feel Irena positively sagging against him. He could sense that she was trying to drift off. Oh his poor little love, using that much magic at one time was never easy on any sorcerer and everything was compounded by the fact that she had just given birth as well. He decided it would be best for her to try and catch a bit of sleep before she went to see the students. Just he sensed that she was just about asleep, his senses were suddenly assaulted by a terrible smell and he realized that Charlie needed changing…badly. It took no time at all for the smell to wake Irena up. She gave him a look; she knew that he still had issues changing stinky diapers.

"Would you like me to get up and change her?" She asked him, her voice still her slightly groggy from trying to sleep.

He hesitated for a moment, it really bothered him that he had such a reaction to his own daughter's stinky diapers and it was something he really wanted to overcome. Irena reassured him over and over again that his reaction to the smell was completely normal and human but he still disliked it. Charlie began to fuss in his arms and that made the decision for him. He knew that the only way he would get over his problem was with practice and there was no time like the present to do so. He shook his
head and gave her a reassuring look.

"No sweetheart, you just lie there and try to get some rest. I think I can handle it." He reassured her.

He could sense that she knew what he was trying to do. She gave him a gentle look and nodded.

"Alright, but if you need me you wake me up." She told him softly, the tone of her voice left no room for argument.

After agreeing that he would in fact wake her up if needed her, he got up and brought Charlie to the make-shift change table. He gently set her down onto it and started un-doing the snaps on her sleeper so he could assess the damage. He could tell that it wasn't going to be pretty but it wasn't a blowout thankfully. As he opened the diaper to begin cleaning up the mess, he was hit with the smell harder and his gag reflex activated. He tried to ignore it but it was proving to be almost impossible. He could sense that Irena was watching him but he still didn't want to give in and ask for her help quite yet. He shuddered at the sheer volume of the mess that he had to try and clean. How could such a little being poop so much already?

Suddenly, he could sense a little bit of amusement coming from Irena and that caused him to make a face. Of course she found his predicament amusing.

"Um Stephen, I understand that your reaction to poop is completely human and normal but you were a doctor at one point and used to dig around in people's brains for a living. Shouldn't you be used to dealing with messy things?" She asked with hints of curiosity and amusement in her voice.

He gave her the stink eye at the question.

"Brains are predictable; THIS on the other hand is torture! IF this was a possible outcome when you opened a skull, I would have become a podiatrist instead! Ugh, oh god. Why does she hate me?" He gagged in between each word.

He heard Irena sigh softly, he knew that she was getting up to come and help him. He felt like such a failure. He felt like this was something he should automatically be able to do and yet he couldn't. He felt as if he was failing himself, Charlie and Irena. It was clear that she could sense his distress. He knew that Charlie could to some degree too. She began to fuss louder. Giving him a tender look, she placed a calming hand on his back and stroked up and down softly.

"Stephen, calm down." She murmured softly.

Her touch calmed him immensely, it always did but he was still upset with himself.

"Normally, I am usually just good at everything I do. What if…what if I never get good at this and let myself, you and Charlie down?" He asked softly.

She let out a soft sigh and gave him a reassuring look.

"Stephen, it's impossible for you to let me or Charlie down. You WILL get good at this; it's no different from when you studied to be a Doctor or when you studied to become a sorcerer. You just need a bit of time and practice. She's a baby and that's a challenge, then she'll be a child and then a teenager. She'll never stop forcing us to learn how to do new things every day. This is just a little poop…okay it's a lot of poop but don't worry we can tackle this together. There will be tons of poopy diapers to come and you can change as many as you need to get the hang of it and I will always be here to help you when you need it." She reassured softly.

He gave Irena a tender look completely filled with love. He had never felt more in love with her then
he did now in this moment. She was his little love, the mother of his child and she couldn't be any more perfect to him. He bent down and kissed her softly.

"Thank you so much, my little love." He murmured softly.

She gave him a soft smile.

"Anytime, now you go and get a wet baby washcloth, make sure it is lukewarm. While you do that, I will take over this part for you." She instructed him.

He nodded and switched places with her. He went to go and retrieve a baby washcloth and he wetted it in lukewarm water. By the time he got back to her with the baby washcloth, she had most of the mess cleaned up already. He just couldn't get over how amazing she was.

"Unbelievable, how did you get such a mess cleaned up so fast?" He asked curiously.

She let out a little snort of laughter at his question.

"Stephen, I am so used to cleaning up messes from living in the orphanage. Plus I'm a mother now; I think it's ingrained in me." She laughed softly.

He chuckled softly at her response. He supposed it was quite a valid one. While she went to dispose of the soiled baby wipes and diaper, he cleaned the rest of the mess off of Charlie's sensitive skin with the baby washcloth. Satisfied that she was clean, he put a fresh diaper on her and changed out her sleeper for a clean one. Now that she was all clean, she had stopped fussing and was gurgling happily once more. It was becoming clear to him that she absolutely hated being dirty. She was most definitely his child there was no doubt about that. Gently, he picked Charlie up and cuddled her close.

"It's that better my little treasure? Hmm?" He cooed to her.

She gurgled back at him and he smiled softly. Gently, he took her tiny fist in his hand and placed a gentle kiss onto it. He could sense that Irena was watching him. He turned to her and gave a her a warm smile. She smiled right back at him. She wasted no time in coming up to him and cuddling into his side.

"Stephen, you are an amazing daddy." She murmured gently, reaching up to place a kiss on his jaw.

He let out a contented noise.

"Thank you, but I am nowhere near as amazing as you my little love." He murmured back to her.

She gave him an exasperated look and was about to say something when the door swung open effectively ruining the entire moment. Wong stepped in the room and smiled at them. He so wanted to give him the stink eye for interrupting such a tender moment. As much as he wanted to give Wong a hard time for interrupting their moment, Irena really needed her checkup and to go see Kaleb and Kass. He knew it would go a long way in helping her anxiety and that was the most important thing for the time being.

*Irena*

Irena snickered at the look on Stephen's face, she could sense that was really annoyed at Wong for interrupting their moment.

'Ooh, Stephen.' She thought in exasperation.
"How is everybody?" Wong asked curiously.

She smiled back at Wong happy that he was here. After he was done with her checkup, he could take her to see Kaleb and Kass.

"So far so good!" She told him happily.

She could sense that he was happy with her response to his question.

"Good! I brought you more salve. Let's get your check up over with shall we?" He told her.

She made a face, she really hated this part. She prayed that she would be able to get away with him just giving her a magical medical scan. She could sense Stephen's protectiveness flare to life; she knew that he wasn't too fond of this part either. Wong gestured for her to go sit down on her bed. She complied with him and went to go and sit down. Stephen was close by with Charlie in his arms watching over her protectively. She could feel Wong's magic crackle to life and then she felt him scan her magically. She held back a shudder, she hated the feeling of being scanned but it was sure as hell better than him having to actually examine her down there. Wong finished the scan and smiled.

"It seems like everything is looking good. I think we can skip the physical examination this time." Wong assessed.

She breathed a sigh of relief, thank god for that bit of good news. Wong turned to Stephen.

"Stephen, should you find anything noteworthy please let me know." He added, trying to hide the fact that he was trying not to snicker.

She couldn't help but turn fire engine red at what Wong was insinuating. Stephen sort of just faceplamed, she could sense the exasperation just dripping from his pores.

"WONG!" He hissed in exasperation.

She saw that Charlie was sleeping peacefully in Stephen's arms and he was trying very hard not to wake her up. Before either Stephen or Wong could say another word, she interrupted the both of them.

"Thanks for the tip, Wong! Do you think you could take me to see Kaleb and Kass? Stephen said I could go." She asked, changing subject quickly.

At her request, Wong quirked a brow and gave Stephen a questioning look. Stephen nodded indicating that he did in fact agree that Wong could take her to see the students. She fought the urge to frown at the fact that they were acting like she couldn't look after herself. She knew that they were just trying to protect her but it was annoying sometimes.

"Alright little sister, I'll take you to visit Kaleb and Kass but just for a quick visit okay?" He told her.

She nodded, that was okay with her. Charlie would have to be fed again soon anyway.

"Okay, that works for me." She agreed.

Before she left, she went up to Stephen and Charlie. She dropped a kiss on top of Charlie's little head and stroked her little cheek softly.

"You be good for your daddy." She murmured softly.
She focused her attention on Stephen for a moment.

"Are you going to be okay without me for a bit?" She asked him seriously.

She wanted to make sure that he would be comfortable without her. He smiled at her softly and nodded.

"Yes, I'll be fine. Now get going." He told her, giving her a gentle nudge in the direction of Wong.

She smiled at him softly remembering their conversation and went back to where Wong was standing and let Wong lead her from the room. She and Wong walked together in a companionable silence to a room that was a few doors down from her room. He gestured for her to knock on the door. She hesitated for a split second and then knocked on the door. It took a moment but the door swung open and Kass stepped out. She looked at both her and Wong and smiled.

"Hello, Master Wong." Kass greeted happily.

Wong smiled back at her.

"Hello Miss Kass, this is Irena she wanted to come and visit you and Kaleb. Is that okay?" He asked her.

Kass nodded. She could sense that she had some idea of who she was.

"Sure that sounds fine to me." Kass agreed.

Wong smiled again.

"Alright good, I'll be back here in about 15 minutes and then I will take you back, okay?" He told her.

She smiled and nodded. That sounded perfect to her, she would need to go back and feed Charlie soon anyway.

"Sounds good to me!" She agreed.

Wong left her and Kass to their own devices and went off to do...something. Kass invited her into the room and she saw Kaleb was sleeping soundly in one of the two beds that sat in the center of the room. She realized that he must have experienced the brunt of Mordo's possession and needed more time to recover than Kass did. Her feelings of anxiety suddenly returned. She felt as if this was all her fault. Kass seemed to realize what she was thinking.

"Irena, please don't blame yourself for this, you saved us. This is all Master Mordo's fault, not yours." She said firmly.

She nodded and pushed all of the bad thoughts from her mind. She knew that Kass was right, this was Mordo's fault not hers. Kass led her to the side of Kaleb's bed. He was in a very deep sleep. She could sense that he was still recovering from the whole ordeal. From what she's read about possession spells, there was an unfortunate side effect. The possessor sometimes leaves behind parts of themselves in the possessed individual. Eventually, the effects wear off and the possessed individual does return to normal it just sucks in the meantime. Sleeping it off tended to work the best.

"How long has he been sleeping for so far?" She asked softly.

Kass thought for a moment before responding to her question.
"Most of the day but he does wake up to eat and whatnot. Don't worry; he has been already sleeping less since the first day we got here. Because you got rid of the possession so fast, I was barely affected and Kaleb is recovering at an incredible rate. Thank you so much for getting rid of the dark magic so fast." Kass said sincerely.

She could hear the sincerity in her voice and feel it coming off of her in waves. Her mismatched eyes softened considerably.

"You're welcome, Kass." She replied just as sincerely.

Suddenly, the moment was ruined by a knock sounding on the door. She frowned in annoyance; her 15 minutes sure went by fast. She and Kass went to the door. She opened the door and sure enough Wong was on the other side waiting to take her back. Part of her wanted to stay a bit longer but she felt that it was time to get back to Stephen and Charlie. She turned back to Kass and smiled at her warmly. She thanked Kass for letting her come and visit her and Kaleb. Kass told her that she was welcome to come back when Kaleb was awake. She bid Kass goodbye and left the room with Wong feeling much better. Seeing that they were going to be okay with her own eyes really did help her quite a bit. Wong walked her back to her room and she could sense that both Stephen and Charlie were sleeping. Now she was just plain curious. She was so sure that Charlie would be extremely fussy and hungry by the time she got back. She thanked Wong for taking her to see Kaleb and Kass and entered her room.

Her mismatched eyes softened at the sweet sight that greeted her. Stephen was sprawled out onto the bed sleeping quite peacefully and had Charlie securely tucked in his tunic. She saw that he had stripped Charlie of her sleeper so that she wouldn't overheat. One of her little arms was sticking out of his tunic and he had a protective hand on her little back. She couldn't help the sweet emotion that bubbled up inside of her. She tip-toed over to the bed and climbed in. She cuddled herself into Stephen's side and tucked her head under his chin. As if sensing her presence, his free arm automatically wrapped itself around her and she let out a soft sigh. As she enjoyed such a perfect moment, she couldn't help but think that Stephen was amazing dad even if he didn't quite think so yet.

Three Days Later

Irena

Irena let a soft sigh, it took a whole week but she finally felt well enough that she and Stephen could return to the Sanctum with Charlie. Before she and Stephen came back with Charlie, Wong and Maximus cooked up a couple of protection spells to keep Mordo from gaining access to the Sanctum for quite some time. This helped ease her anxiety quite a bit but she could still sense the taint that Mordo's dark magic left behind and it put her on edge. She hated it so much but she knew that Wong, Maximus and Stephen were working to get rid of it as fast as they could.

While Stephen was busy helping Wong and Maximus assess any damage done to his Sanctum by Mordo's dark magic, she was having some quiet time with Charlie in the bedroom. She and Stephen had decided that for the time being Charlie would sleep in the portable bassinet with them in the bedroom until they established some sort of routine and all of the taint from the dark magic was gone. She just finished nursing Charlie and was now trying to sooth her to sleep. As she did this she gave Sapphire a scratch on the head. Since she returned, poor Sapphire had been glued to her since she got back not that she blamed her at all. She was shocked that she didn't hate her after being abandoned for a whole week. Thankfully, Wong checked in on her frequently and made she was fed and what not. She also had the cloak to play with too so she hadn't been alone the entire time.

Suddenly, she was jolted from her thoughts because she needed to pee. She frowned, peeing still
wasn't her favorite thing in the world but it wasn't quite as bad as it was the day after she had Charlie. Sighing softly, she got up from the bed and gently placed Charlie in her bassinet. She went into the bathroom and took care of business as quickly as she could. As she finished up, she could sense that Maximus had entered the room. What in the world did he want? She exited the bathroom and was shocked to see Maximus hovering over Charlie's bassinet cooing to her. She could barely hold back a snort of laughter that was threatening to escape from her.

"Um Maximus, did you need something?" She asked curiously.

Maximus whirled around quick, she could just feel how mortified he was at being caught fawning over Charlie. He cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Er, yes I do actually. I want to have a conversation about a certain door and key with you." He explained.

Immediately she could feel her anger spike at what he told her. She just gave birth a week ago and he was already on her case about that. Like what the hell?

"Excuse me, Maximus? I just gave birth a week ago and you want to drop me into the Dark Dimension already? What the hell?" She hissed in anger.

She could sense Maximus' anger and annoyance increase dramatically at what she told him. She was almost shocked at the potency of it and hoped to god that it wouldn't affect Charlie in any way.

"Don't you think I am aware of that fact? Do you really think I would just dump you in the Dark Dimension and leave you to trample through that hell hole all on your own? What kind of protector would I be if I did that?" He hissed right back to her.

Immediately, she felt bad for what she said. She knew that Maximus wouldn't just throw her in there willy nilly. She didn't mean to snap at him, her nerves were just a little frayed at the moment.

"Maximus, I'm sorry. I'm just stressed and still hormonal, I didn't mean for what said to come out the way it did I know you wouldn't just drop me in there. I'm sorry." She apologized.

Maximus' electric green eyes softened considerably at her apology.

"I know, I know. I just wanted to desensitize you to the key first that's it. I promise we will tackle the other stuff at a later date. "He told her gently.

She sighed; she knew she would have start tackling that stuff at one point or another.

"Alright, fine just please let establish some kind of routine first." She begged.

Maximus gave her a look of understanding and she let out a sigh of relief. All of this stuff was becoming too much for her to handle at once.

"Yes, of course you can. I know all of this is hard on you but it's something that can't just be ignored unfortunately." He told her.

She wrinkled her freckled nose at what he said; she really hated being reminded of that unfortunate truth.

"I know and thank you for understanding Maximus." She said gratefully.

Maximus shifted uncomfortably and nodded.
"Of course, I must get back to helping Stephen and Wong now. Take care of yourself, little girl." He mumbled softly.

He floated away from her and out the door without another word. She could sense the awkwardness just dripping from him. It was clear that he still had difficulty displaying any other emotion besides 'pompous asshole' and she found that to be hilarious. She still couldn't believe she caught him fawning over Charlie. She couldn't wait to tell Stephen it was too bad she hadn't caught video evidence of it thought. She sighed softly and turned her attention back to Charlie, she was happy to see that she was still sleeping like a log. Now that she had a few minutes to herself, she decided that maybe shower was in order. As she was about to put that thought into practice, her enhanced senses picked up her phone blaring *I am iron man* by *Black Sabbath* and her mismatched went huge.

'Ooh. My. God. TONY! I forgot all about Tony! What kind of daughter am I?' She thought to herself.

Because of everything that happened, she hadn't talked to Tony since last week! He probably thought she was dead or something! She raced out of the bedroom to try and find her phone so she could call him back. She was so lost in her own little world that she failed to see Stephen coming in the other direction presumably to come and check on her until she crashed right into him. Her face literally bounced off of his chest and he had to catch her before she fell onto the floor like a sack of potatoes.

She rubbed her achy nose; Stephen sure had a hard chest. She could sense that he found the action endearing. He was giving her a tender look.

"Where's the fire, sweetheart?" He asked curiously.

"I'm trying to find my phone. Tony called and I haven't talked to him in a week. He probably thinks I'm dead or something!" She explained.

She knew that Stephen could sense that she was wound tight. He ran his large hands down her arms to try and help her calm down a little. It was helping a little bit but not much.

"Shh my little love, you need to relax some. We will find your phone, I promise you and I'm sure Tony doesn't think you are dead either." He soothed.

She tried to calm down but for some reason being told to relax was just making everything feel worse. She frowned and he gave her and questioning look. That was like the last straw that broke the camel's back. Between Mordo's attack on Kamar-Taj, the stupid door, the fact that she had given birth just a week ago and now Tony her anxiety had reached its peak.

"Stephen, I can't just relax! Anxiety doesn't give me that luxury, unfortunately!" She snapped.

She could sense that Stephen was shocked at her outburst.

"Excuse me? I know this isn't easy for you at all, sweetheart. I get that but it's extremely difficult to know how to help you the right way when you keep insisting on keeping everything bottled up inside!" He snapped back.

She looked at him in shock. As she tried to figure out how to respond to what he told her, she could sense that somebody entered the Sanctum.

"Hey is anybody home?" Tony called from downstairs.

She looked at Stephen who looked right back her with a look that clearly said that their conversation was not over. She knew that was coming. She could sense that Stephen was a little bit frustrated with
her but it was nothing like when they had that huge fight. She knew that everything would work itself out.

"Hang on Tony, I'm coming!" She called back to him.

She looked down at what she was wearing and sighed. An old tank top and baggy sweat pants, thank crap she had a bra. It would have to do; at least everything she had on was clean. She and Stephen descended the stairs together. Tony was in the foyer and so was Pepper, they were probably so worried about her that they came by to see what the deal was. As soon as she was standing in front of Tony, it was like something fell apart inside of her and she just threw herself at him. Tony stiffened in shock for a moment and then wrapped his arms around her. Tony tried to sooth her to the best of his abilities. She could sense that both Stephen and Pepper where in total shock at her display. She could also sense that Stephen was pouting a little. She knew that it was because she chose to throw herself onto Tony instead of him. She felt bad but she just couldn't help it.

"Geeze kid, what happened to you? He asked in shock.

She could tell he was looking at Stephen like he wanted to murder him. Oops. She pulled back from him so she could explain to him what the matter was before he did just that.

"Tony, it's okay it has nothing to do with Stephen. I'm just stressed out." She explained, wiping away her tears.

Tony gave her a look.

"Okay, does it have anything to do with why you haven't called me in a week?" He questioned her.

She winced and nodded.

"Yes, as you can see we've had a bit of an unexpected arrival." She explained, pointing at her stomach.

Both Tony and Pepper looked at her shocked.

"Do you mean…?" Tony trailed off in shock.

She smiled and nodded.

"Yep, you have a granddaughter. Would you like to meet her?" She asked softly.

Both Tony and Pepper nodded at a complete loss for words. She smiled back at them. She left the foyer to go and get Charlie while Stephen led them to the lounge so they could sit down. She went to her and Stephen's bedroom and was not shocked to see that Charlie was still sleeping like a log. Gently, she took Charlie out of the bassinet and maneuvered her so she was resting against her shoulder comfortably. She made sure to pick up a receiving blanket before she left the room because there was a good chance that Charlie would spit up at some point during the visit. She left the bedroom and made her way back down the stairs carefully. She walked into the lounge and was happy to see that Stephen was having some kind of conversation with Tony and Pepper. As soon as they realized that she was back, everything went silent for a moment before Pepper let out a gasp.

"Oh honey, she's so beautiful!" Pepper gushed.

She smiled softly at Pepper. She could how sense emotional Tony was. She knew that he didn't quite know how to react.
"Thanks Pepper, did you want to hold her?" She asked, already knowing the answer.

Pepper nodded. She handed her the receiving blanket just in case and placed Charlie gently in her arms. Pepper started cooing at her, she thought it was adorable.

"What name did you end up picking for her?" She asked curiously.

She gave Pepper a soft look, she knew that Pepper had sort of an idea of what she was about to say.

"We decided on the name Charlotte or Charlie for short." She replied.

Instantly, she could sense the emotions in the room shift once more. Charlie was always an emotional subject for her and they knew that she had been wanting to honor his memory somehow for a long time now.

"It's perfect." Pepper murmured.

Tony made a noise of agreement. She could sense that the emotions were getting him and that it would probably be a good idea to change the subject.

"Say Grandpa Tony, would you like to hold her?" She asked curiously.

Tony made a face at being called 'Grandpa Tony'. He hesitated for a moment and then he nodded. She could tell that he was totally out of his element. Gently, she took Charlie from Pepper (who didn't want to give her up) and placed her Tony's arms. She handed him the receiving blanket but he refused.

"I'm pretty sure I won't be needing that." He said confidently.

She inwardly shook her head. She knew differently but decided to let Tony find out for himself that he should always take the receiving blanket when offered one. He sat with her and cooed to her. It was like nothing that she had ever seen before. She could sense how happy he was and it was amazing to feel. She had never felt Tony be happy quite like this before. Suddenly, in a split second everything changed. Without much warning Charlie spat up all over Tony's arm and Tony's eyes got huge.

"OH MY GOD! Pepper, Irena she just puked all over me! Why did she puke all over me?" He squeaked in shock.

Both she and Pepper burst out laughing and Stephen was snickering in the background.

"I told you to take the receiving blanket, didn't I?" She snickered.

It took a moment, but she went to go retrieve some baby wipes and managed to clean Tony up however he decided that he was done holding Charlie for the moment. After the excitement of Tony being puked on died down, the rest of the visit went pretty smoothly and they talked about different things. After a while, Charlie began to get cranky and she knew that it was time to feed her. She said her goodbyes to Tony and Pepper. She made sure to tell them that they could come and visit Charlie whenever they wanted to. After Tony and Pepper left, she wasted no time in going back to the bedroom so she could nurse Charlie. Stephen of course was following close behind. She entered the bedroom and prepared to feed Charlie. Stephen helped her to get comfortable.

"I'm sorry." She murmured to him.

His eyes softened and he gave her a tender look.
"I'm sorry I just threw myself on Tony like that, I couldn't help it. My hormones are still out of whack and I'm sorry I am having difficulty dealing with my anxiety." She apologized.

He sighed softly and cuddled her into his side.

"I know sweetheart, I know it's hard and I will help you figure out how to deal with this better, I promise you." He murmured back, placing a tender kiss onto her temple.

She let out a long sigh and tried to sink into him further.

Dealing with the aftermath of everything that had happened in the last week had been harder on her than she could have ever imagined but thankfully she knew that Stephen would always be there to help her through it no matter what.
To Be a Good Mother

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hello everybody! Finally and update! I know it has been forever since my last update, my grandma is doing quite well and has been discharged from the hospital today so I hope that helps with the updating thing. As for this chapter, you will see that is freaking huge, I mean like a monstrosity chapter. I could have broken it up but I thought what the heck, I'll give you all something to chew on. In saying that, I am petrified that I didn't do a very good job writing this chapter; it has very emotionally charged parts in it and damn is that stuff hard to write. I can only hope I did it justice. If anybody reading it could let know if it is good or not that would be awesome! Speaking of good things, I have to say I am continuously floored about how much people seem to be liking this story. Every time it gets something on it makes me so happy, so thank you for all the kudos and comments! Much love to everybody!

I think that is all I have to say, happy reading everybody!

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Irena

Dream/Memory

6 year old Irena let out a small little sigh and clutched 'Dark' closer to her small chest. Ever since she had managed to somehow separate Mr. Mordo and Gideon when they were fighting each other with her magic, nothing had been the same and everything had changed. She was no longer allowed to be with 'Mr. Mordo' alone or train with the other sorcerers anymore.

Every time she tried to ask her 'Mother' why this was, she would always change the subject on her and she didn't know why but it bothered her a lot. Were her powers really that bad that nobody except her 'Mother' could be around her anymore? For some reason, this really made her upset. She didn't want people to think was weird or a freak or something like that.

Quietly, she walked into the training grounds and sat on a bench. She was happy to see that it was completely empty. She knew that her 'Mother' would eventually track her down but right now all she wanted to do was be alone for the moment. She tried to sort through her emotions but it was so hard. As she sat there thinking to herself, she began to sense that her 'Mother' was approaching the training grounds probably looking for her. Sure enough, she rounded the corner and came and sat down next to her on the bench. She gave her a gentle look.

"Sweet child, what are you doing here all by yourself?" She murmured softly.

Irena wrinkled her little freckled nose. She had no idea how to answer that question without sounding kind of dumb.

"I don't know, just thinking I guess. Did I make everything change because of my powers? Is everything my fault?" She asked, trying to hold back the tears that were burning her eyes.
At her question, the look on her 'Mother's' face turned from gentle to comforting. She ran her hand through her messy hair and gently caressed the side of her face. She found the gesture to be incredibly soothing and it made her feel much better.

"No my love, I assure you none of this is your fault. Your powers are a gift not a curse I promise you. Sometimes we must endure changes in our lives that we do not like because the outcome of our lives will be better for it." She explained to her wisely.

As she tried to decipher just what her 'Mother' meant by what she said, she sensed that 'Mr. Mordo' entered the training grounds. It was immediately clear that something wasn't right at all. He just stood there staring at her and her 'Mother'. She could sense that something strange was emanating from him. She didn't know what it was only that it was very bad. Her 'Mother' seemed to be able to sense it too. Whatever was happening, it began to frighten her and she didn't like it at all. Suddenly, her 'Mother' rose from the bench and opened a portal. Before she could even try to understand was happening, her 'Mother' had scooped her up and entered the portal. They came out on the other side in front of a large old building. Looking at the building for a moment, it didn't take her long to work out what the building was for. Suddenly, a terrible feeling lodged itself deep within the pit of her stomach. Her 'Mother' wasn't planning on leaving her at this place was she?

She turned in her 'Mother's' arms, she couldn't help the look of hurt and betrayal that formed on her face. Did she not want her anymore? She began to panic; she didn't want to be left at this strange place all alone without her. She couldn't help the big fat tears that rolled down her cheeks. Her 'Mother' gently placed her down onto the ground and crouched down in front of her. She began to gently wipe the tears away.

"Don't you want me anymore? I don't want to go here I want to stay with you!" She pleaded.

Her 'Mother' held a look in her wise blue eyes that she had never seen before and couldn't quite understand but it made her feel so very sad. She moved her hand from her small cheek and pushed her messy hair out of her face.

"Shh my sweet child, of course I still want you. I will always want you but this is something that must be done for your own good. I know this is so very difficult for you to understand but I promise you that all will be well in the end. Here, I will make it easier for you." Her 'Mother' soothed gently.

Irena wondered just how she intended to make such a terrible thing easier on her until she whispered something and the tips of her fingers began to glow softly. She gently touched the tips of her glowing fingers to her forehead and her mismatched eyes grew large as all of her memories of Kamar-Taj began to slowly slip away from her mind. As the memories continued to slip from her mind, the tears began again. Then as suddenly as it began, it was over and there was nothing left.

End Dream/Memory

Irena woke with a start and struggled to catch her breath. Sitting up slowly, she pushed her sweaty hair out of her face. She tried to regulate her breathing but it felt impossible with the lump of emotion that was clogging her throat. She couldn't help the tears that slid down her face. She felt a pair of strong arms wrap around her vibrating form. She buried her face into Stephen's bare chest and let out a small sob. What a terrible thing to remember. She may not have been able to understand it then but she understood it now. Her 'Mother' made such a selfless, heartbreaking choice to set her on the right path. She could only imagine what would have happened if she hadn't. Tony would have never found her and then she would have never met Stephen. She could only imagine what Mordo would have done to her by now. He would have either figured out a way to steal all of her powers or mind-controlled her into opening the forbidden door and releasing all of the dark magic trapped there or possibly both. Thinking those things caused a large shudder to ripple through her. She didn't want to
be turned into some kind of weapon from hell. The thought of that scared her so much. She knew that Stephen could sense her fear and she felt him tighten his arms around her a little bit more. He murmured nonsense into her ear and she found it to be incredibly soothing. She finally felt herself calming some and for that she was grateful. She didn't want to hyperventilate or Charlie to feel how distressed the dream made her. Finally she was calm enough for Stephen to pull away from her slightly. He gave her a gentle look. She could sense that he had figured out what she dreamed about and that he wanted to coax her into talking about it.

"Sweetheart, I know that this is extremely hard for you but maybe you would feel better if you talked about it, hmm?" He coaxed gently.

She made a face; she knew that he was right. Talking about it would really help but she was having difficulty figuring out how to start such a conversation. She decided that she would just do it like ripping off a Band-Aid. That technique always seemed to work the best. She told him everything that happened in the dream from the disturbing look on Mordo's face before her 'Mother' opened the portal and took her away from Kamar-Taj all the way up until she reached the part where she used the memory suppressor spell on her. At this part, she felt herself begin to get upset all over again.

"The look she had on her face while she was using the memory suppressor spell will forever be seared into my mind, Stephen. It was like pure agony." She sobbed.

Stephen's arms re-tightened around her and he placed a loving kiss on her temple. He gently pushed her sweaty hair out of her face.

"Oh my tiny little love, I know it's a terrible memory to re-live but she took your memories away to protect you. She did something so completely selfless. She made sure that you were safe from those looking to exploit your powers and set you on the right path. She wouldn't want you to be so upset about what happened. I know it's hard." He murmured softly.

Snuggling deeper into Stephen's arms, she let out a soft sigh that was punctuated by some hiccups. She knew that he was right; her 'Mother' wouldn't want her to be so sad about what happened. As she continued to try and calm herself down with Stephen's help, Charlie began to fuss and cry in her bassinet. She knew it was because her distress over the dream hung so heavily in the air. She parted from Stephen a little reluctantly to go and take Charlie out of her bassinet. She shifted Charlie so she was resting comfortably on her shoulder and began to soothe her.

As she soothed Charlie, all she could think was how happy she was that Charlie would never have to go through life the way she did. Charlie had a Mommy and Daddy who loved her very much and that was because her 'Mother' made such a selfless sacrifice.

As terrible as the memory was, she would never ever stop being grateful for what she did.

Sometime Later

Irena

Irena stifled a large yawn with her left hand. Unfortunately, she still wasn't feeling that great mentally or physically for that matter. After she managed to soothe Charlie back to sleep she had been unable to get back to sleep properly herself. So she just ended up drifting between asleep and awake for some time before she decided that she had enough and ended up just getting out of bed all together. She knew that it was a combination of the dream/memory that she endured, being a new mother and every other crazy thing that's happened recently. She knew that it would work itself out eventually. Currently, she and Stephen were in Charlie's nursery getting her ready for the day. She was changing her diaper while Stephen was picking out a sleeper for her to wear. He pulled out one with unicorns
and rainbows all over it. She couldn't help but giggle a little bit at the interesting look that formed on
his face.

"Now what in god's name is THIS monstrosity?" He asked incredulously.

She couldn't help the full on snort of laughter that escape her at Stephen asking her that.

"It's a sleeper with unicorns and rainbows all over it, Darcy bought it for her. I thought you liked
magical things?" She giggled.

Stephen rolled his stormy blue eyes at her.

"Har, har, I happen to like magical things that actually exist thank you very much!" He snarked.

She rolled her mismatched eyes right back at him.

"Oh quit being such an old man, it's an adorable sleeper and you know it!" She teased him.

She gestured for him to give her the sleeper and he complied. She could sense that he was
completely affronted at being called an 'old man'. She held back the snigger that threatened to escape
her. He was just so much fun to tease. As she waited for his next move, she gently maneuvered the
sleeper onto Charlie's tiny body and did up the snaps. As she did this, she watched a boyish grin
form on his face and knew that something was coming.

"Yes well, with age comes wisdom. That means I'm smarter than you!" He teased right back.

For a moment, she froze in shock and then desperately fought the urge to let out a snigger once more.
She could NOT believe that he just used the 'I am smarter than you' taunt what were they like four
years old? She just had to win their little game now, he was so going down. She gave him a mock
insulted look. She was going to play it up good.

"Are you saying that I'm dumb? You know what, I was just teasing you but what you just said to me
was mean!" She mock pouted at him.

She could sense that she had him totally confused. This was just too perfect.

"Wait a minute, what?" He asked in confusion.

She continued to give him a mock angry look.

"You heard me! I should make you sleep on the sofa for telling me that and have the cloak sleep with
me tonight instead!" She told him mock angrily.

Clearly hearing what she just said, the cloak levitated into the room and she could sense it was very
happy about it. It was doing the cloak equivalent of a 'happy dance' and was trying to rub it in
Stephen's face any way it could. She was so close to losing it, the look on Stephen's face was
priceless. Glaring at the cloak, he shooed it away.

"Are you really serious?" He asked incredulously.

Finally, she just couldn't take it anymore and burst out laughing. She could sense that he had finally
realized that she was messing with him the entire him.

"Oh of course not! Who's the smart one now?" She laughed, giving him a wink.

For a moment she could sense that he was completely shocked at how well she managed to beat him
at his own game and then his shock melted into playful exasperation.

"You are incorrigible you know that?" He murmured softly, moving into her personal space to place a kiss on her temple.

She made a noise of contentment, enjoying his closeness.

"You bet I do!" She giggled back at him.

She moved to gently pick Charlie up off the change table but Stephen stopped her. She gave him a questioning look.

"Sweetheart, why don't you have a shower and a quick nap while I look after Charlie for a little bit? I know are in need of both." He suggested gently.

She gave him a grateful look. His suggestion sounded glorious.

"That sounds like a wonderful idea." She agreed wholeheartedly with his suggestion.

He gave her a gentle smile. With extreme care, he picked Charlie up off of the change table and cradled her in his arms. She watched Stephen coo to Charlie for a moment and couldn't help the sweet emotion bubble up inside of her. She could sense just how unconditionally Stephen loved Charlie. It made her feel so good inside. She cuddled up next to Stephen and placed a gentle kiss on his jaw and he let out a contented noise. She also stroked Charlie's little cheek and placed a kiss on her little velvet head.

"You be good for your daddy." She murmured softly.

She turned her attention to Stephen for a moment and gave him a good and proper kiss on the lips. She could sense that he thoroughly enjoyed the affectionate gesture.

"You are amazing." She murmured against his lips.

"Oh I know." He murmured back to her.

Pulling back, she gave him a look of complete exasperation and he gave her a cheeky grin right back. Fighting the urge to roll her eyes, she left Stephen to enjoy his daddy-daughter time with Charlie while she went to go and get cleaned up. She wasted no time going into the bathroom. Turning the shower on, she stripped and got in after it had reached the right temperature. She let out a groan of contentment as she began to shampoo and condition hair. She never realized that washing her hair could feel so good. After she finished washing her hair, she washed the rest of herself and then jumped out of the shower. After drying out her hair, she wrapped a towel around her tightly around herself and cleaned her teeth. Satisfied that she was good and
clean, she exited the bathroom in search of something to wear. Because her bottom half was still a little on the sore side, she opted for something baggy. She decided on a pair of Stephen's pyjama pants and a tank top with a bra of course. Stephen's pants were far too long for her but it didn't bother her at all. Feeling much more human, she went and carefully crawled onto the bed. She let out a happy sigh and got herself comfortable. Picking up her cell of the night table next to her, she found Darcy's number and pressed talk. It barely rang once before Darcy picked up.

"Oh my god girlie I thought you were dead or something, what the hell happened to you?!" Darcy exclaimed loudly.

She winced at the loudness of Darcy's voice.

"Sorry D, I didn't do it on purpose this time I swear. Things have been a little insane around here this week; we had an unexpected arrival you see."

It took Darcy no time at all to work out what she meant by 'unexpected arrival' and Darcy gasped through the phone.

"Are you telling me you gave birth? OH MY GOD, I am so excited! What did you end up having?" Darcy asked excitedly.

She laughed at Darcy's excitement and her bluntness; she sure was one of a kind.

"That's exactly what I'm telling you, I had a girl. Would you and Bucky like to come over and meet her?" She asked curiously already knowing what the answer would be.

Darcy let out an excited squeal; she could practically sense her excitement through the phone.

"Of course Bucky and I want to meet her! When would you like us over? Oh my god, I can't believe I have a niece!" Darcy said excitedly.

She couldn't help but smile at Darcy's eagerness to meet Charlie, her excitement was so infectious.

"Okay, how about you come in a couple of hours? That way I have time to get ready, does that work for you?" She suggested.

She heard Darcy make a noise of agreement at her suggestion.

"Sounds good to me! I'll see you soon, girlie!" Darcy said happily.

After telling Darcy that she would see her soon and bidding her goodbye, she hung up her phone.

One Hour Later

Irena

Hearing her shrill alarm, Irena's eyes snapped open and she let out an annoyed growl. She turned the stupid alarm off before she pitched her phone into the wall and sat up. That hour nap just didn't feel long enough. She felt marginally better than she did an hour ago but not as much as she had hoped she would. She wondered why that was but decided to let it go for now. She had far more important things to worry about at the moment like getting Charlie ready to meet Darcy and Bucky. She eased herself out of bed and went to go and find Stephen; she had an idea where he would be. She walked
to his study and sure enough she could sense that he was inside. She could sense that he was meditating and her curiosity was piqued. How in the world was he meditating with Charlie?

She entered his study and saw that he was levitating in place with Charlie safely tucked into his tunic. He had one of his arms positioned to make sure she stayed in place. She also saw that he stripped her of her sleeper to make sure that she didn't overheat in his tunic. Her eyes softened at the sight. She couldn't get over what an amazing father Stephen was. She would never stop reminding him of that. She could sense just how content Charlie was and just how relaxed Stephen was. She approached Stephen as carefully as she could so she wouldn't accidentally disturb his meditation. Soon, she could sense that he knew that she was there and she knew that he was coming out of his state of mediation. His stormy blue eyes fluttered opened and he gave her a tender look. He smiled at her warmly.

"Well hello beautiful, you certainly look like you are feeling better." He told her warmly.

She gave him a warm smile back. She still couldn't get over the fact that no matter what she looked like, he still called her beautiful even though she was in a pair of his pajama pants and an old tank top. It was one of the many, many things she adored about him.

"I sure do feel better and you are looking pretty relaxed yourself, handsome." She giggled.

He chuckled softly. Making sure to keep a protective hold on Charlie, entered her personal space and pressed a gentle kiss onto her lips. She enjoyed the feeling immensely. She turned her attention to Charlie and stroked her little hand. She let out a little yawn and stretched. It was just too cute. She really didn't want to disturb her but she was left with little choice.

"Somebody is enjoying daddy-daughter time." She murmured softly.

Stephen gazed at Charlie tenderly for a moment and then turned his tender gaze back onto her.

"Indeed." He murmured back to her.

She sighed, she really felt like an asshole for having to move her. She could sense that Stephen knew something was up and gave her a questioning look.

"I invited Darcy and Bucky to come over and meet her. I want to get her ready and feed her but she just looks so comfortable that I don't want to move her." She explained.

Stephen let out a warm chuckle at her dilemma. She could sense that he thought it was adorable.

"Sure, sure, laugh it up!" She whined.

Gently as she could, she tried to take Charlie out of Stephen's tunic. Immediately, she made a small cry of protest at being disturbed. After a bit of soothing, she settled back down and slept against her shoulder soundly. Stephen gently caressed the top of her little velvet head and dropped a gentle kiss onto it. She could sense that he didn't want to end the moment any more than she did.

"You better go and get ready yourself, Darcy and Bucky will be here soon." She told him.

She could sense that he was reluctant to go and she gave him a look.

"Stephen, come on." She coaxed.

It took a bit more coaxing, but he finally relented.
"Oh alright fine, I'll go and change." He grumbled.

He finally left the room to go get cleaned up and she gave his retreating form an exasperated look. She picked up Charlie's sleeper that Stephen left on his desk and then left the room as well. She took Charlie back to her room so she could re-dress her and check her bum. Entering Charlie's room, she gently placed her onto the changing table and got to work. Thankfully it was just a lot of pee and no poop. She could only hope that she would hold off on pooping while Darcy and Bucky were visiting. She and Stephen were discovering just how often a being as tiny as Charlie was could poop and it was a lot. Because Stephen had been trying so hard to get over his aversion to poopy diapers, he had been trying to tackle majority of them. In the night, she had suffered a pretty bad blowout and he managed to clean her up. As he was putting the fresh diaper on, it turned out that she hadn't been quite finished yet and managed to fire off a poop missile right onto his leg. Of course this caused him to let out a yell and her to come running to see what the problem was. Once she realized what had happened, she couldn't help but burst out laughing at the scene he made with poop all over his leg. Of course, he wasn't happy with her for laughing at him but she helped him get cleaned up and he got over it quickly. They both knew that it was all part of the new parent learning experience.

After she finished changing Charlie, she re-dressed her and picked her up gently off the changing table. She knew that she had just enough time to feed Charlie before Darcy and Bucky got to the Sanctum. She decided that she would just do it in the foyer while she waited for them. Before she left Charlie's nursery and headed to the foyer, she remembered to pick up a receiving blanket. Hopefully, she wouldn't spit up this time around. She snickered to herself as she remembered the look on Tony's face as she spit up all over his arm. Leaving Charlie's nursery she made her way to the foyer and got herself comfortable. She positioned Charlie just the way she liked and got herself ready, it took her a moment but she got her to latch on and she began nursing. As she enjoyed her mommy-daughter time with Charlie, she let herself relax. So much so that she almost drifted off. Suddenly, she could sense that Darcy and Bucky would be at the Sanctum soon. Thankfully, Charlie was just finishing up and she was able to re-adjust herself before that happened. She gently wiped away Charlie's milk mustache with the receiving blanket too.

As she finished up, the Sanctum's front door swung open and in stepped Darcy and Bucky. Of course Darcy wasted no time in coming to check Charlie out. Bucky on the other hand was a little more hesitant and she felt for him. She knew that it would take a bit to convince him that he wouldn't hurt her. She gestured for him to come and sit and he finally did.

"Oh my god she is so cute! What did name did you choose for her?" Darcy gushed.

She smiled softly at Darcy.

"Stephen and I chose Charlotte or Charlie for short." She said softly.

Immediately, there was a change of emotion in the room. Both Bucky and Darcy helped her get passed what happened with Charlie in so many ways and understood her need to honor his memory somehow. Bucky gave her a soft look.

"That's a perfect name, doll face." Bucky murmured softly.

Darcy made a noise of agreement.

"Thanks you two. Darcy would you like to hold her?" She asked curiously.

She could sense that Darcy was just itching to ask her that question.

"Yes, please!" She replied excitedly.
She laughed at Darcy's excitement. Gently, she placed Charlie into Darcy's waiting arms and made sure to give her the receiving blanket too. She immediately began to coo and gush over her some more. It was so funny to watch. Suddenly, she sensed that Stephen was finally coming to join them; sure enough he came down the stairs and entered the foyer. After exchanging greetings (manly greetings in the case of Stephen and Bucky), she and Stephen decided that it would be nicer to visit in the lounge of the Sanctum instead of staying in the foyer the entire time. After they sat down and Darcy cuddled Charlie some more, she began to sense that Bucky wanted to hold Charlie but he was so scared to ask. Oh poor Bucky.

"Bucky, would you like to hold her?" She asked softly.

Immediately, she could sense that even though Bucky really wanted to hold Charlie he was going to decline. She stopped him before he could.

"Bucky, it's okay; I promise that you won't hurt her." She reassured.

Bucky had an unsure look on his face but he finally relented and nodded. She took Charlie and the receiving blanket from Darcy and gently placed her in Bucky's metal arm. She also gave him the receiving blanket just in case. He was looking at her with huge eyes as if to say "Are you insane? You just put her in my metal arm, why did you just put her in my metal arm?" and she merely gave him a reassuring look back.

She could see that Charlie was wide awake now and was looking up at him with her big blue eyes. Poor Bucky was stiff as a board. She tried to get him to relax the best she could. Finally, he reached up and touched Charlie's little fist. She tried wrapping her tiny little fingers around his large one. It was just so adorable to watch and she could sense that Darcy thought so too. Suddenly, she cooed and Bucky became stiff all over again.

"Um, what was THAT? Was that normal? I didn't make her do that did I?" Bucky squeaked in shock.

She couldn't help the snort of laughter that escaped her at his question. Darcy and Stephen also snickered a little bit too. He gave everybody the stink eye and she gave him a bit of apologetic look. She knew that holding Charlie was a huge deal for him and he was nervous as it was.

"It's okay Bucky, that noise was completely normal I promise." She reassured him gently.

Immediately, she could sense that Bucky calmed down once more.

He held Charlie for a while longer and then carefully handed her back to Darcy who was dying for another turn. While she and Darcy caught up a little bit, he started asking Stephen a bunch of questions about what it was like to be a dad. It felt so good to just be normal for a bit and not be constantly worrying about Mordo, or her magic or a certain key and door. A little while later, she could sense that Charlie was beginning to get hungry. Sure enough, she began to fuss and cry. She knew that her visiting time with Bucky and Darcy was up. After promising to bring Charlie to tower soon so everybody could meet her, she walked Darcy and Bucky back to the front door and bid them goodbye. After Darcy and Bucky left, she took Charlie to her nursery so she could feed her and Stephen went to the library to go talk with Wong. Apparently, Wong was working on something for her (she didn't know what) and he wanted to go check on his progress. She was okay with that, she still wasn't feeling all that well and wanted some more alone time with Charlie.

Entering Charlie's nursery, she went to the rocking chair and got herself ready. She positioned Charlie just the way she liked and got her to latch on. Again, it took a bit, but she eventually got her to start nursing. She let out a soft sigh a let her mismatched eyes drift shut. She started to get so
relaxed that she started drifting off to sleep like she did earlier. She must be way more exhausted than she thought she was. As she was just about out, Maximus suddenly exploded though the wall to the right of her looking very pissed off. Suddenly, Sapphire came into the room and started jumping through Maximus repeatedly. It was very clear that she just realized that she could do this. She sighed, this was her fault she hadn't been able to pay Sapphire enough attention because she has been so busy with Charlie and now she was acting out. With all the commotion going on now she knew that it was too noisy for Charlie to eat anymore. She had to do something about this mess.

She re-positioned Charlie so she was resting on top of the receiving blanket on her shoulder and got up from the rocking chair.

"Sapphire would you knock it off already!" She hissed angrily.

Sapphire immediately did as she was told and stopped jumping through Maximus. She gave her a look similar to a puppy that just got caught doing something bad.

"Sapphire I'm sorry I've been busy, why don't you go and find the cloak to play with. I promise I will spend time with you later." She said softly.

She could sense that Sapphire seemed to understand what she told her. She darted off to find the cloak and she breathed a sigh of relief.

'Thank god for that.' She thought to herself.

She turned her attention back to Maximus who was now pointing at her chest and spewing complete nonsense. She wondered just what in the hell his problem was until she looked down and realized that in her haste to shoo Sapphire away. She hadn't properly tucked herself back into her tank top and was now flashing Maximus a little bit. She turned beet red and re-adjusted herself properly.

"Oh my god Maximus I am so sorry!" She apologized profusely.

Maximus tried to wave her off nonchalantly but she could sense on the inside he was anything but. She could sense the embarrassment just dripping from him. If he could be blushing right now he would be.

"It's alright, thank you for rescuing me from that little blue trouble maker of yours. I better be off now." He told her trying to keep his voice level.

She could sense that he was just itching to bolt from her but she stopped him. Despite what just happened, she needed to talk to him about the stupid door and key.

"Maximus wait; I wanted to discuss the door and key with you a bit more." She managed to get out before he left.

He stopped and turned back to face her. He had a look of understanding in his electric green eyes even though she could still sense the embarrassment just dripping from him.

"I know but it is something you should be discussing with Stephen first. You won't be able to do it without him. Discuss it with him and then come to me with him and we will talk about it." He advised.

She nodded and let him make his hasty retreat. She knew that he needed a bit of time to get over the shock of being accidently flashed.

She sighed and sat back down hopefully now that it was quite once more she would be able to
finished feeding Charlie in peace.

Maximus

Oh god, he couldn't BELIEVE that just happened. He hadn't meant to appear in Charlie's nursery and interrupt Irena in the middle of nursing Charlie like he did but that little blue hellion left him with little choice. She somehow figured out that she could jump through him and all hell had broken loose.

Stephen was going to kill him for sure or trap him back in that godforsaken book or kill him and then trap him inside of the book. Either that or he would die of embarrassment first even though he was already dead.

The most amazing part of the whole thing was that Irena didn't even care that he saw her….he shuddered to himself. He couldn't even say the word in his head! She probably had more important stuff on her mind that she was worrying about but still.

He entered the library trying to appear normal. Clearly he was failing miserably because both Stephen and Wong were already looking at him funny, crap what was he going to do? He floated up to Wong and Stephen to help them with their project. They were trying to create a spell to help Irena deal with the darkness of the door and the key. It had become very clear how sensitive to she was to dark magic. He, Stephen and Wong were trying to cook something up to help her combat that problem.

But right now, Stephen and Wong just continued to look at him funny. Stephen spoke up first.

"Maximus, just what is the matter what you?" He asked curiously.

He swallowed hard and then accidentally blurted the first thing that came into his mind.

"Why is there such hype about breasts? I mean, they're just a body part, I don't know why so many men are obsessed with them." He blurted.

Both Stephen and Wong looked at him with shock. Oh he just stuck his foot in it now.

"Okay, what in the HELL are you going on about Maximus?" Wong asked incredulously.

"I mean really, they are functional, not sexy at all." He rambled.

Stephen looked at him funny and quirked a brow at him.

"Functional?" Stephen said in confusion.

"You know, providing nutrition and nothing to be thought of as attractive in any way shape of form." He continued to ramble on.

"Um, okay?" Wong said, but it came out more sounding like a question.

He could sense that something had clicked in Stephen's brain and he gave him a hard look. Oh how he wished something would come and put him out of his misery.

"Maximus, why are you talking about this particular subject all of a sudden? Never mind that, why are you even thinking about it to begin with?" He asked demanding an answer.

"Um, nothing really just something I saw?" He supplied weakly.
That was all it took for both Stephen and Wong to realize what had happened. Wong started laughing hysterically and Stephen just glared at him. He decided that it was time to go before he got vaporized and disappeared out of sight. Hopefully, Irena could make Stephen somehow forget the whole incident and he wouldn't have to spend the rest of eternity hiding in a wall like an undignified coward.

Stephen

To say that he was angry was an understatement; Irena's body was for his eyes only! He had to know what happened. It was clear that Maximus somehow got a peak of something that he shouldn't have and he wanted to know how the hell it happened. He left the library and went to his and Irena's bedroom. Sure enough he sensed that she and Charlie were inside and they were both sleeping. He entered the bedroom and saw Irena was sleeping soundly on the bed and Charlie was sleeping like a log in her bassinet. After checking on Charlie, he sat down on the edge of the bed. Gently, he ran his hand through her messy, curly locks. Oh his poor little love; he could sense just how tired she was. He hated waking her up but he just had to know what had happened with Maximus. He continued to stroke her cheek then he moved his hand slowly down her neck and let it rest on the sliver chain of her relic for a moment before continued his way down to her shoulder. At this point he could sense that she had begun to wake up, she stretched and her mismatched fluttered open. She smiled when she saw him but her smiled quickly turned into a frown when she sensed that something was bothering him.

"Stephen, what's the matter?" She asked groggily.

He made a face; he wasn't quite sure how to word what he had to ask her.

"Sweetheart, did you see Maximus at all today? Did he by chance somehow catch a glimpse of something he shouldn't have?" He asked her softly.

It took her no time at all to realize exactly what he was talking about.

"Oh Stephen, it was just an accident. Sapphire was harassing Maximus and he accidentally popped into the nursery trying to escape her while I was feeding Charlie. I stood up to shoo her away from him without checking myself first. It was pretty funny actually." She explained gently.

At her explanation, he could feel it his anger melting away. She was right; it really was just an accident and quite a silly one too. He decided he would find Maximus later on and let him know that he was off the hook. Otherwise knowing him, he'd spend the next five months hiding from him in a wall fearing that he would trap him back in the book he came from or something of the like.

"Alright sweetheart, I'll let Maximus off the hook this time but it better not happen again!" He joked.

She let out a soft laugh and then yawned. Oh his poor little love, she was exhausted. He let his hand move back up and he started running it through her messy hair soothingly once more. He could sense that even though she was on the verge of sleep once more, she had something else that she wanted to tell him.

"Stephen, the door and key, we have to talk about the door and key." She murmured.

He frowned at what she said. Oh that stupid door and key. He hated that she had been burdened with such an insane task. He decided that she was too tried to talk about the door and key now and that they would talk about it tomorrow instead. He wanted to tell her about the spell that he Wong and Maximus were creating anyway.
"Shh my little love, you are too tired talk about such things now. We will talk about it tomorrow."
He murmured softly.

He could sense that she wanted to protest but knew that he was right.

"Alright, fine." She relented.

He chuckled softly. He could see that she had already fallen back asleep. Gently, he placed a kiss on her temple and then went to change into his night clothes. He decided that it would be a good idea to join her and sleep while he could before Charlie woke up again. After changing into his night clothes, he wasted no time in climbing into bed with Irena. Immediately, she curled around him and let out a soft sigh. It took him no time at all to join her in sweet oblivion.

Sometime Later

Irena

Irena twitched in her sleep, she could sense something but she just couldn't force herself to wake up and see what it was. It felt good, kind and very familiar. Whatever it was, it was talking to Charlie. She knew that voice; it was her 'Mother'. She could feel the tears just threatening to escape.

She couldn't make out exactly what she was telling Charlie, maybe she wasn't meant to but she did take comfort in knowing that no matter what Mordo or anybody tried to do her 'Mother' would always be watching out for them.
A/N: Hello everybody! Here's a fresh chapter off the press ready to go, I hope you all like it! I just have to take a moment to thank everybody for the swell feedback from the bottom of my heart! Honestly it had been so awesome! Thank you all so much for the kudos and bookmarks! Every time I get something it makes my day! Please do me the huge favor of keeping that stuff up!

Note: Okay so this chapter is chalk full of plot and all kinds of stuff. More parental fluff and some roadblocks, more on the spell Stephen, Maximus and Wong are creating for her and a whole lot of creepy ass Mordo. I am sure everybody knows by now that he has gone completely off of his rocker now, complete insanity the whole nine yards of crazy. So I have to throw in a bit of a warning here, the beginning of this chapter is seriously creepy because Mordo has essentially turned into a psychopath. I decided I would put a warning up so that if anybody isn't comfortable reading that kind of stuff the fantasy part can be skipped with no problem. I just thought I would give the option to anybody who needed it. I don't want to send anybody running for the hills!

Note 2: This chapter does have mention of a medical condition. Again, I am no doctor and I got all my info off the net so if something isn't quite right my apologies for that!

Okay! I think that is everything! Happy reading everybody!

Disclaimer: I own nothing!

In Between Dimensions

Mordo

Karl Mordo let out a low angry growl. He couldn't BELIEVE how easily Irena managed to dispel his magic and free those students from his hold. It was clear that he would have to come up with a different plan if he wanted Irena and her daughter for himself. Just the mere thought of possessing that much magic made him shudder. He could finally teach Strange a painful lesson as well. He wanted Strange to be forced to watch him as he drained his daughter's magic dry and to watch him as he destroyed Irena's memories of him and destroyed their bond. He wanted nothing more than to make Strange pay for misusing the mystic arts and to watch him suffer for taking Irena away from him. Irena was HIS damnit. His little dragon girl and he would get her back! He also thought about the forbidden door and let out a long low growl. Once he stripped Irena of her memories and took their daughter's magic, he would force her to open the forbidden door and take what was behind it as well. Just thinking about what was behind that door caused his eyes to darken and his nostrils to flare slightly. His dark eyes drifted closed and he allowed himself to fantasize for a brief moment.

Mordo grinned maliciously at Strange who was pinned to the wall with magical bonds. Strange glared right back at him and put up hellacious fight to try and free himself to no avail. Irena was passed out cold at his feet. In his right arm, he held their little daughter snugly. He could sense her distress and she was crying and he was enjoying every minute of it. He placed his hand on her small chest and began to siphon her magic bit by bit and couldn't help but groan as he did so. It felt so
good. Yelling and snarling, Strange fought even harder against the bonds.

"Mordo, let them go! Your fight it is with me!" He snarled.

His malicious grin only got bigger at what Strange just yelled.

"Oh no Stephen Strange, you must pay for your indiscretions against the Mystic Arts and for taking what does not belong to you!" He snarled right back to him.

He turned his attention from Strange to Irena who was still passed out cold at his feet. Making sure to keep proper hold of the crying baby his arms, he bent down to magically revive Irena from her unconsciousness. He watched as her mismatched eyes snapped open. Immediately, she tried to scramble to her feet. It took her no time at all to realize what was happening. She immediately focused on her crying daughter in his arms. He knew that she could feel her distress. She glared at him and summoned her fans.

"Give me back my daughter, you psychopath!" She yelled loudly.

She made to attack him but he stopped her before she could and he magically froze her. Like Strange, she put up a hellacious fight to free herself.

"Tsk, tsk, I think we are in need of an attitude adjustment, my little dragon girl." He told her with a sinister look on his face.

As if knowing what he planned to do, her mismatched eyes became large and he could sense the fear just rolling off of her in waves. It was so strong that he could almost taste it. He approached her slowly and placed two fingers gently onto her forehead. He whispered something softly and his fingers began to glow purple with tainted magic. As the spell worked on her, her entire body went slack and her fans disappeared. Those mismatched eyes her that he couldn't get enough of became devoid of all emotions. Strange was begging her not to give him but his efforts were futile her light was no match for his darkness. He could sense Strange was in absolute agony as the spell finished and the soul bond shattered. He entered her personal space and stroked the side of her face. She remained completely motionless and didn't react to his touch. He moved his hand down until he reached the relic that hung around her neck. He touched it and watched as purple began to swirl with the blue. He watched the colors mix and he grinned evilly.

"Now isn't that much better my pretty little dragon girl?" He crooned darkly.

She stood still completely devoid of any emotion and did not acknowledge him.

"Good, now summon that key for me!" He ordered.

She looked at him emotionlessly and nodded.

"Yes, Master." She murmured tonelessly.

She held out her small hands and curled them slightly. She concentrated hard and the dark key slowly began to materialize in her palms. He began to sense the darkness emanating from it and it caused his eyes to darken considerably. While this was happening, Strange continued to fruitlessly beg Irena to fight his hold on her. He felt absolutely drunk on darkness, the feeling was indescribable. He wanted more; he took the key from her and before he left to go find the forbidden door he gave her another order.

"Finish him off!" He snarled without a second thought.
Again, she stared at him emotionlessly and she nodded once more.

"Yes, Master." She repeated tonelessly once more.

She summoned her fans and they were tainted with dark magic. Strange looked completely horrified and he could sense his anguish. He couldn't help but revel in it. He had Irena, her little daughter, complete access to the forbidden door and Strange right where he wanted him. It was time for Strange to pay his dues and he would enjoy every minute of it.

Suddenly, something shook him from his little fantasy and he couldn't help but let out a low aggravated growl. Unfortunately, he knew that unless he could come with a better plan it would remain his little fantasy and never become reality. Judging from how fast she expelled his dark magic from those students she was learning the extent of her heritage and her powers very quickly. He knew that that this was due to that fact that she had her stupid spirit protector looking after her and always guiding her in the right direction. The other major problem that he had to deal with was the bond that she and Strange shared. He wasn't aware of it at first, but the bond that they shared was no ordinary soul bond. He knew that when the Ancient One had determined that Irena was in fact the 'descendant of the guardians' and that Strange was in fact immune to darkness, that she would do everything in her power to set them both on the right path. Unfortunately from him, she had succeeded and it now it would be damn near impossible to shatter such a bond. After all, only a sorcerer who is completely immune to darkness can help the 'descendant of the guardians' fulfill her destiny. He knew that there had to be SOME way to destroy such a bond and he WOULD find it. He would find a way to trap her stupid spirit protector back in his book as well. He WOULD have what belonged to him and he would destroy Strange in the process one way or another.

In the Library of the Sanctum

Irena

Sitting at the wooden table in the library, Irena sighed tiredly and played with the baby monitor in her hands restlessly. It had been two days since she had 'the dream' as she called it now and her 'mother' had come to visit Charlie. While her emotional state had improved some-what, she still physically felt like crap and she had no idea what the deal was. At first she just continued to attribute it to being a new Mother and lack of sleep but it seemed to be getting worse instead of better. She felt like she had the flu, she felt achy all over and overheated. One of her boobs felt unusually harder than the other and a lot more sensitive to the touch. Again, she attributed these things to becoming a new mother, her body was still going through a whack load of changes and she was still trying to figure most of them out. She let out another soft sigh, it was also possible that she was feeling worse because she hadn't been separated from Charlie before for so long before so that probably wasn't helping her either. Stephen, Maximus and Wong were trying to show her how to use the new spell that they were trying to create for her to counteract some of the effects of her sensitivity to dark magic but she was having such a difficult time staying on task. She knew that Stephen could sense that something wasn't quite right with her. He gave her a worried look.

"Sweetheart, is everything alright?" He asked worried.

She smiled softly at him and tried to give him a reassuring look.

"I think so; I'm still just really exhausted from everything that's been going on lately." She reassured him.

She could sense that he wasn't quite buying what she told him and he entered her personal space. He tenderly pushed her curly hair out her face and stroked her cheek. He frowned and she could feel his worry increase ten-fold. Was she really THAT hot to the touch?
"Are you sure you feel alright, my little love? You feel so hot to the touch." He murmured softly, moving his hand to touch her forehead gently.

She got up to try and reassure him once more that she was okay and the room started spinning on her. Okay, so maybe she wasn't as alright as she thought she was. Her legs turned to jelly under her and she felt very light headed. She felt herself collapsing onto the ground and Stephen, Wong and Maximus all let out a loud exclamation not expecting to see what was happening in front of them. Stephen with a little help from the cloak managed to catch her before she hit the floor. Gently, Stephen scooped her up into his arms and she snuggled into him. Her mismatched eyes slowly drifted shut. She was feeling so hot, tired and generally crappy that all she wanted to do was sleep.

Stephen

Stephen couldn't believe what just transpired in front of him and neither could Wong and Maximus for that matter. He could sense that something wasn't quite right with Irena but he too chalked it up to lack of sleep and being a new Mother at first but when he touched her and felt how hot she was he knew that it was something else entirely. She was hot and feverish and if he didn't keep it under control the situation could turn dire. Everything else would have to be put on hold until she was better. He wasted no time in leaving the library and going to their bedroom. He wanted to get her in the bath as soon as possible he knew it would help with her fever. He entered their bedroom and got her into the bathroom. He gently placed her into the bathroom floor so he could start running a bath and cloak stayed underneath her protecting her a little bit from the cold bathroom floor. Immediately, he began to get her clothes off so he could get her into the bath as soon as possible. The cloak of course didn't like this and tried to put up a fight. He knew that it was just trying to protect her and wanted him to just get her in the tub already but now was definitely NOT the time for it. After he managed to shoo the cloak away, he got her clothes off and was shocked to see that one of her breasts looked very sore, swollen and tender. He tried to gently examine it to confirm his suspicions; she hissed in pain and tried to swat his hand away. He understood what was happening to her now; mastitis was a very common thing for new mothers to get. Even bottle feeding mothers got it from time to time. She probably didn't even realize that she had it because the symptoms mimic the flu so well. Oh his poor little love. Gently, so he didn't disturb her tender area he picked her up carefully and got her into the tub. He didn't care about getting his clothes wet; he would just deal with them later. Immediately, she came to life and started thrashing around. He had the water lukewarm but because she was so feverish it felt ice cold to her. He soothed her gently.

"Shhh sweetheart, I've got you." He murmured soothingly into her hair.

He managed to calm her some and he let out a relieved sigh.

"That's it, you're okay." He cooed softly, stroking back her hair gently.

He could sense that she enjoyed his touch and he continued his ministrations. He sat with her in the bath tub until he felt that she had finally started to cool down some. After a bit, he decided it would be a good idea to get her out of the tub before she started shivering. After draining the tub, he got out her out as carefully as he could all the while trying his best to be mindful of her chest. Carrying her into the bedroom, he got her into bed and the cloak immediately tried to wrap around her. He let it knowing that it could keep her comfortable without compressing her poor chest too much. He watched as one end came up and started stroking the side of her face and his stormy blue eyes softened at the sight. He knew that the cloak was as worried about her as he was.

Now that he knew that she was somewhat comfortable, he decided that it was time to deal with his sopping wet clothes. He stripped himself of them and quickly threw on a pair of pajama pants. After he did that, he went to check on Charlie and was happy to see that she was sleeping like a log.
Thank god for small miracles. This gave him time to get a cold compress ready for her to help with the pain. He knew that Charlie would eventually wake up and need to be fed but he would cross that bridge when he got to it. He really didn't want to leave her or Charlie but he knew that she needed something to manage the pain a bit better. Reluctantly, he left their bedroom and went to the kitchen to get an ice pack and then he went to find something to wrap it in. After he did this, he got back to their bedroom as fast he could. He really didn't want to leave her alone for any length of time. Wrapping the ice pack up in the towel he found, he approached the side of bed and gently coaxed the cloak to move out of the way a little bit. He placed the ice pack on her tender area and watched as she breathed a small sigh of relief. He could sense her relief so strongly that it was almost palpable. It made him feel some relief too and he felt that he could finally relax a bit.

He sat for a moment with her and continued to try and soothe her some more with the cloak until he could sense that Charlie was starting to get hungry. He knew that she would wake up soon and he internally debated with himself for a bit. The doctor in him was telling him to wake her up so she could nurse Charlie like she normally would because it would help dispel the infection faster but the part of him that was so completely bonded to her didn't want to cause her anymore pain. Just what in the hell was he going to do?

**Sometime Later**

**Irena**

Stirring slightly, Irena cracked open her sore tired eyes. Looking around she realized that Stephen must have carried her to bed after she fainted. As she tried to move around, she realized that the cloak was wrapped around her protectively. She also realized that she was minus her clothes. She was so confused what on earth happened to her and where in the hell were her clothes? She tried to sit up and felt a burning pain shoot through her right boob and she still felt a little feverish. She reached up to try and touch it to see what was going on with it but before she could the cloak wrapped one of it's ends around her wrist and stopped her before she could. She began to get a little scared what was going on with her?

Before she could get herself too worked up, the door swung open and in stepped Stephen with Charlie in his arms and she knew that he must have went to go and change her. Seeing that she was awake, he wasted no time in coming to her. She knew that he could sense that she was a little bit freaked out. He gave her a tender look.

"How are you feeling, sweetheart?" He asked her softly.

"Crappy and a little scared. What is happening to me?" She replied, a little afraid to know what the answer was.

She knew that Stephen could sense this and he gave her a reassuring look.

"You have a mild case of mastitis; it's a common thing for new mothers to get. I promise you it will go away on its own in a couple of days." He explained to her reassuringly.

After hearing his explanation, she calmed down quite a bit. At least it wasn't something abnormal and it would clear up in a couple of days. Turning her attention to Charlie, she could sense that she was getting hungry. She was awake and was sucking on her little fist. She realized that she would need to feed Charlie soon and she became worried all over again. Could she even feed Charlie when she was like this? She was really trying to avoid feeding Charlie formula but they did have a stash of bottles in case of emergency.

"Can I still feed Charlie when I'm like this?" She asked worriedly.
Stephen smiled softly at her and nodded.

"You can and should. It will help flush the infection out." He explained gently.

"Would you like to try and feed her now?" He added.

She breathed a sigh of relief and nodded back to him. She maneuvered the cloak out of the way and he gently placed Charlie in her arms. She positioned Charlie how liked and tried to get her to latch on but it felt so uncomfortable. She began to nurse and it really started to hurt. At first she tried to ignore it but it got to the point where she just couldn't any more. She couldn't help the big fat tears that streamed down her face. It felt like her body was betraying her and she really hated it. Clearly sensing her distress, he was instantly at her side. He gently wiped away her tears.

"Oh sweetheart, what's wrong?" He asked softly.

She felt so ashamed telling him this. She felt like she was giving in but it just hurt way too much and she couldn't help it.

"It hurts too much Stephen, I can't do it. It hurts too much." She sobbed.

Stephen pushed her messy hair out of her face and soothed her gently.

"Oh my sweet little love, it's okay. It's nothing to be ashamed or upset about. These things happen, feeding Charlie formula doesn't make you a bad mother I promise." He murmured to her soothingly.

She tried to calm down some before her emotions upset Charlie. Stephen was right having to feed Charlie formula for a bit didn't make her a bad mother. She was just dealing with an unfortunate set back and it would eventually clear up. She just had to deal with it until then. She gave Stephen a grateful look for helping her through her little moment. She honestly didn't know where she would be without him. He always knew just what to say and exactly went to say it.

"Thank you Stephen, I needed to hear that." She told him gratefully.

She started to feel exhausted again and knew that Stephen could sense it. He gave her a tender look.

"You are exhausted sweetheart, would you like me to take Charlie while you lie down again? I will call Wong up here and ask him to get us a can of formula." He told her gently.

She wrinkled her freckled nose but she nodded. She still hated all of this but Stephen was right she was feeling crappy again and Charlie needed to eat.

"Alright." She murmured softly.

She let Stephen gently take Charlie from her arms and tried to get herself as comfortable as she could without causing herself too much pain. The cloak wrapped itself back around her protectively and started soothing her the best that it could. She found it to be very comforting and her mismatched eyes began to droop closed. She felt Stephen place a gentle kiss on her temple and then she was out like a light once more.

**Stephen**

Stephen let out a soft sigh. Oh poor little love. He felt so bad for her. He could feel the shame positively dripping from her. He knew that she felt like this was her fault and he was happy that he managed to convince her otherwise. Turning his attention to Charlie, as soft look formed on his face. She was looking up at him with big blue eyes still trying to eat her fist. He reached up and caressed
the side of her little face. He could sense that she was hungry now and that it was time to call Wong up to so he could go get him that can of formula. Before he did that, gently placed her in her bassinet so he could go and retrieve her pacifier and find those baby bottles he and Irena stashed away. After he did that, he would call 'Uncle Wong' to come and bail him out.

**In the Library**

**Wong**

Moving around his hidey-hole, Wong gathered all kinds of different magical herbs to mix together into an herbal tea to hopefully help her to feel better faster or at least help some of her symptoms. It was sort of like a cure all. He only hoped that it would work. Whatever caused her to faint he knew that it wasn't good. When she was trying to learn the spell that they made for her he could sense just how bad she felt. He knew that Maximus was very worried about her too. Not that he would admit it out loud, but he could sense it coming from him a mile away. Suddenly, he could sense that Stephen was trying to call him magically to him and he instantly dropped everything that he was working on and left the library. He had to know if his poor little sister was okay or not.

He wasted no time in getting to Stephen and Irena's bedroom. Approaching the bedroom door hesitantly, he knocked on the door carefully. He had no idea what was going on in there. He was shocked when the door swung open and Stephen stepped out looking extremely relieved to see him with a very fussy and cranky Charlie in his arms. He could sense that Charlie was hungry. He looked at Stephen with worry.

"Stephen, everything is clearly not alright. What in the hell is going on?" He asked worriedly.

Stephen let out a soft sigh and wordlessly stepped out of the way so he could enter the bedroom. He was shocked the sight before him. Irena was sleeping in the soundly in the bed with Stephen's cloak covering her completely. He could sense that she was unwell. She looked feverish and like she was in pain.

"She has a mild case of mastitis. She tried nursing Charlie twice but found it too uncomfortable and painful to continue doing so. I need you to do something huge for me Wong, I need you to go to the pharmacy and get me a can of baby formula. Can you do that for me?" He explained.

He gave Stephen a look of understanding and nodded.

"Sure I can, it should be no problem at all." He agreed.

Stephen smiled at him; he could sense the gratefulness just oozing from him.

"Thank you my friend, I owe you one." Stephen said sincerely.

He couldn't help but snicker at what Stephen said a little bit. Stephen owed him more than one at this point.

"I think at this point, you owe me about 20." He snickered, trying to lighten the mood a little bit.

Thankfully it worked, Stephen gave him a look of complete exasperation and rolled his eyes at him but he could sense that he was a little less stressed at the situation now.

"WONG!" He hissed in exasperation.

He put his hands up in surrender and started backing out of the bedroom.
"Alright, alright, I'm leaving! One can of baby formula coming right up!" He laughed.

Exiting the bedroom, he went to the foyer of the Sanctum to open up a portal. He prayed to every god above that this mission went smoothly and nothing crazy happened because he had no idea what he was doing but Stephen was his best friend, Irena was his little sister and Charlie was his niece. He couldn't let them down. He entered the portal and popped out if it into an alley way next to the pharmacy. Exiting the alley way, he walked up to the pharmacy and said a little prayer to himself and then he slowly entered the building. Immediately he sought out the aisle with the baby supplies and the baby formula. When he finally found what he was looking for, he was shocked to see just how many different kinds there were. He ran his hand through his short cropped hair. How was he supposed to choose the right one?

'Oh, come on! Why can nothing ever be easy?' He thought to himself in annoyance.

He stood there wondered what to do for a moment until he suddenly sensed a presence right next to him. It just reeked of everything good. He turned to find a young woman standing next to him. He determined that couldn't be very much other than Irena. She had curly blond hair that was tied up and out of her face. She had a nice round little face with cute little button nose and a pair of the hugest, greenest eyes that he's ever seen. She was smiling at him warmly. It was clear that she worked here and determined that he needed help. Her name tag told him that her name was Rosie. Oh this was so embarrassing.

"Can I help you with something over here?" She giggled softly.

Oh he must look like the biggest tool ever. He cleared his throat and tried to talk normally.

"Um yes, you see my sister just had a baby and we had sort of an emergency and I need some formula." He tried to explain.

Her smiled grew even bigger and he could feel himself blush. Oh how he wanted the floor to swallow him whole.

"Oh that is so sweet that you are helping your sister out!" She gushed.

She plucked a can of formula off of the shelf and handed it to him.

"Here you, this your best choice for such a situation. I hope everything works out." She said kindly.

She was still smiling warmly at him and felt his insides go all goopy. This was definitely not good at all. He had to get out of the store before he made an ass of himself. He briefly wondered if this is what happened to Stephen when he first met Irena and then shook himself of the thought. Why was he even thinking such things?

He tried to look normal and smiled back at her. Despite the fact that he was suddenly turning into a giant dipstick for some reason, he was extremely grateful for her help.

"Th-thanks for your help." He stuttered softly.

He left the situation before he could make it any worse and went to pay for the formula.

"You're welcome!" She called from behind him.

He could sense that she thought he was adorable and she liked him. He could feel his face heating up again. Oh this was so, so bad. He paid for the formula and left the store as fast as he could. What in the hell WAS that? Whatever it was, he had to put it out of his mind for now. He had more important
things that he had to do deal with like getting back to the Sanctum before Stephen killed him.
Entering the alley way he first came out of, he summoned a portal and wasted no time in entering the
portal getting back to the Sanctum. He quickly made his way to Stpehen and Irena's bedroom. He
knocked on the door and it swung open. Stephen stool there trying to sooth Charlie with her pacifier
and gave him the stink eye. Before he could even understand what was happening or plead his case,
Stephen was on top of him grilling him about where he was and why it took him so long.

'OH. CRAP. This is so not good.' He thought to himself.

"What in the hell took you so long? Where else did you go?" Stephen grilled him relentlessly.

Immediately, began to freak out internally. He hadn't realized that he had taken that long to get the
formula. Oops.

"Stephen, I swear I just went to the pharmacy to pick up the formula that's all. There is more than
one kind so I had no idea which one to get so that put me behind. I'm sorry." He explained.

He strategically left out the part about the store clerk helping him out. God help him if Stephen ever
found out about that. Stephen gave him a look like he could sense that he was leaving something out
and he began to get a little flustered himself. Thankfully, he managed to hide it well enough and
Stephen let it go for now. He knew that he had more important things to worry about at the moment.

'Thank god for small miracles.' He thought with relief.

"Alright Wong, I believe you. I'm a little on edge right now. I'm sorry." Stephen apologized.

He accepted the apology, he was extremely happy that Stephen didn't try and press him any further
about it.

"It's okay Stephen I understand; do you want me to help you? I can hold Charlie while you get the
bottle of formula ready." He offered.

Stephen gave him a grateful look.

"If you could I would be eternally grateful." Stephen said gratefully.

After handing Stephen the can of formula, he positioned his arms properly and Stephen gently placed
Charlie in them. She really started getting very cranky and fussy. He tried walking around with her
hoping that it would help a little bit while Stephen went to get the formula ready. He continued to try
and sooth her until he came back into the room with a bottle in hand. He had the top of the nipple
covered with his finger and was shaking it thoroughly. He wasted no time in carefully handing
Charlie back to Stephen.

After notifying Stephen that he was putting something together for Irena to help her feel better faster,
he left the room so Stephen could feed Charlie in peace. He sighed now he had a bunch of his own
problems to work out. His thoughts immediately drifted back to what happened at the pharmacy and
he knew that he was in so much trouble.

Stephen

Stephen ran a hand through his messy hair; what a day this turned out to be. He really owed Wong
big time. He did know how he would have dealt with this situation without him. He let out a soft
sigh. He held the bottle in one hand and cradled Charlie in the other. He used his foot to try and
maneuver the chair from his desk closer to the bed so he could watch over Irena while he fed
Charlie. After he did that, he sat down and positioned Charlie so he could feed her comfortably. He
placed the nipple near her mouth and she took it easily thankfully. She suckled greedily and he let out a sigh of relief. Now that she was eating and Irena was resting comfortably he felt a lot better. He could sense that Charlie was feeling a lot better too.

"Is that better my little treasure? Hmm?" He cooed softly to her.

He looked at Charlie tenderly as her eyes slowly began to droop closed. She was resting her tiny arm on top of his large one. He couldn't help the indescribable emotion that jolted through him. He turned his tender gaze to Irena and let out another soft sigh. He loved his little family so unconditionally and would do anything for them.

No matter what happened, he would never change anything, not a thing, not EVER.
A/N: Hello everybody here is a new chapter hot off the press! Before we get to the good stuff I have a couple of things I would like to talk about but first I have to thank the two people that left me kudos on the last update. Thank you wonderful guests you!

1) Okay so this is the chapter where the adventures of the dark dimension begin! Seeing as there is no real description of said dimension in the MCU, I kind of took a little bit of liberties about what I wanted it to be like. I decided to channel my inner horror movie nerd with it. Unfortunately because I decided to end the chapter differently then I intended we only have the door this time around. More will come in the next chapter, but regardless of that if anybody has any ideas or anything they think I should add to it, I am all ears.

2) The next chapter is the other thing I have to talk about. I have noticed sort of a drop in feedback on this story since the last two chapters were posted compared to Lightfire or even Eyes Like the Devil (which I will be updating in the next few days BTW). Now normally I am not one to throw around ultimatums but in this instance I feel I have to. I pour my blood, sweat, tears and a little bit of soul into this story each and very time I post a new chapter. This story is my baby and I want you all to be enjoying it and much as I enjoy writing it. Here's where the ultimatum comes in. I need people to let me know if this story is still worth updating on here or not because if it isn't I will take it down and just keep updating the other two stories instead. So please do me the favor of letting me know whether or not it is worth keeping up here or not or even just leave me a kudos or something.

Alright, thank you for listening to what I have to say. I know it was long and a pain in the ass but I really believe that this story deserves better than getting a bunch of hits and not much else! Okay, on with the show and happy reading everybody!

Irena

Irena sighed, it had been exactly two days since she came down with mastitis and she was finally feeling somewhat normal. Her fever had passed and she felt well enough to be up and about but she was still sore and tender which annoyed her to no end. Because of this, she and Stephen were still feeding Charlie bottles of formula. While it still wasn't her favorite thing because she really missed the bonding with Charlie she got from nursing, it wasn't upsetting her as much as it once did in beginning. During the first night of her ordeal, she was still feverish and going in and out of sleep all night. One of the times she woke up, she caught sight of Stephen feeding Charlie and she could sense just how much that he was enjoying it. She knew that she wouldn't be able to ask Stephen to just stop doing it when she got better enough to start nursing again. Not only did she enjoy watching him bond with Charlie, she enjoyed feeling his emotions too. It was amazing to feel just how much he loved her unconditionally. She knew that he would do anything for her. The more that she mulled over the idea of Stephen feeding Charlie in her head, she more she realized that there might be some real benefit to it especially during the night she could get a little bit of extra sleep and he could have more bonding time with her. It was something that she would be definitely discussing with Stephen.
when she had the chance.

Now that she was up and about, she decided that it was a good idea to make herself something to eat because she couldn't remember the last time that she ate something plus she knew that Wong and Stephen would want to eat. God knows what they did when she was stuck in bed for two days. Her boys and cooking just did not mix at all. Plus Stephen was so busy with looking after her and Charlie she would be shocked if he had actually gotten the chance to eat anything at all. Before she got to work, she adjusted the baby monitor once more to make sure that she could hear Charlie though it properly. Leaving Charlie alone in the bedroom to sleep while she did things in other parts of the Sanctum was something that she was working on becoming more comfortable with. She didn't know if it was just because she was a new mother and she was still getting used to a lot of things or she was still dealing with some after affects from Mordo attacking Kamar-Taj. Either way she just didn't like leaving Charlie alone for any length of time. Since she was now up and about, she decided that now was as good a time as any to practice getting more comfortable with it.

After she finished fiddling with the baby monitor, she went to the fridge and opened it up to see what she had to work with. It took her no time at all to figure out how Wong and Stephen lived without her cooking anything for two days. The fridge was filled with various take out containers. She fought the urge to roll her mismatched eyes. Of course the fridge was filled with take out containers. She seriously wondered how they lived before she got there and how they both didn't weigh 300 pounds each. It was amazing how much good their training did for them. Looking at the containers of take out, she decided that she might as well pick through them and see what Wong got. There was no telling when Charlie would decide to wake up so quicker meal prep would probably work better than trying to make a meal from scratch. She was still pretty tired anyway.

Taking all of the containers out of the fridge, she got a plate from one of the cupboards and a fork from one of the drawers. She wastes no time in rifling through them. After she picked out what she wanted, she put all of the take out containers back into and put her food into the microwave to warm it up. The microwave beeped and she pulled out her food. She picked up the baby monitor and took her plate of food to the little table in the corner of the kitchen. After placing the baby monitor onto the table she sat down began to enjoy her meal. When she was just about done her meal, she began to hear that Charlie was starting to fuss and cry through the baby monitor. She knew that it was time to go and feed her. She had been away from her long enough anyway. Getting up from the little table, she picked up the baby monitor and her dirty dishes. She put the baby monitor onto the counter and took care of her dirty dishes. As she finished up, Charlies fussing increased in volume through the monitor and she knew that she needed to hurry up. She wasted no time in getting a bottle of formula together. Thankfully, it took no time at all. After she finished making the bottle up, she covered the nipple of the bottle with her finger and shook the bottle well. Once she finished shaking the bottle and she was sure everything was good to go, she plucked the baby monitor off of the counter with her other hand and left the kitchen quickly.

She got to her and Stephen's bedroom and wasted no time in entering it. She placed the baby monitor and bottle down onto the little table that sat next to Stephen's side of the bed and went to Charlie's bassinet. She was fussing and crying and trying to kick her little legs. She gently took Charlie out of her bassinet and began to soothe her.

"Shhh my girl, mama's here." She cooed softly.

She could sense how hungry Charlie was becoming. She wasted no time in plucking the bottle off of the night table and she got comfortable on the bed. She placed the nipple of the bottle near Charlie's little mouth and she took it with no trouble at all. Now that her little tummy was being filled with food, Charlie began to calm down quickly and she let out a sigh of relief. She got more comfortable on the bed and enjoyed her mommy-daughter time. When she was about halfway done feeding
Charlie her bottle, Sapphire came into the room and she smiled softly. Sapphire adored Charlie as much the cloak did. She was very curious about her and always had to check out everything she did with her. Sapphire crawled up the bed and came to check out what she was doing. She could sense the little dragon's curiosity and she couldn't help but giggle a little bit.

"Oh Sapphire, you are such a funny little girl." She giggled softly.

She continued to watch Sapphire until she decided to get comfortable and curl up on her legs next to Charlie. When she and Stephen first brought Charlie to the Sanctum, Stephen wasn't too sure if he liked Sapphire being so close to Charlie or not. She was quick to remind him that like the cloak, Sapphire was a magical being and she wasn't the same as a regular reptile. It took a bit of convincing, but Stephen eventually realized that she was right and let it go. She was shocked at how fast the cloak accepted it as well. She was sure that the cloak would put up a huge fight about Sapphire coming anywhere near Charlie. She wondered if they just decided that keeping up their truce and working together to 'protect' them worked better than arguing with each other all of the time.

Just as Charlie finished up her bottle, she decided that she would seek Stephen out through the bond to see where he was. She knew that because she still wasn't exactly one hundred percent yet that she would need to catch a small nap after she finished feeding Charlie her bottle. She sensed that Stephen was meditating and smiled. She knew that he would come and check up on her as soon as he finished. After Charlie finished her bottle, she put the bottle down on the night table and she re-positioned her so she could burp her. As she did this, she sensed that Stephen had finished his meditation and was coming to check up on her with perfect timing as usual. Sure enough, about three minutes later the bedroom door swung open and he entered the bedroom.

He smiled when he saw her burping Charlie. He wasted no time in approaching her; he bent down and kissed her tenderly. He also dropped a kiss on Charlie's tiny little velvet head.

"How are you feeling, sweetheart?" He asked softly.

She could sense his protectiveness through the bond and gave him a reassuring smile.

"Still not myself yet but I do feel much better, I think I might need a bit of a nap after this." She reassured him gently, stifling a bit of a yawn.

He gave her a tender look and nodded in understanding.

"Alright, how about I take her for a bit of daddy-daughter time after you've finished that way you can have a bit of a nap?" He suggested.

Her smile turned from reassuring to affectionate at his suggestion. She loved it when he mentioned daddy-daughter time. It was just so adorable.

"That sounds good to me, what did you have in mind?" She asked curiously.

She watched him as he thought hard for a moment and then she could sense that he came up with something.

"Hmmmm, I think I might take her for a stroll in park. A change of scenery might be nice." He decided.

She gave him an affectionate smile at his idea. She thought it was a great idea. She wanted to take Charlie to the tower at some point soon so any practice getting her ready to go out somewhere was a very good thing but she decided that she had to have a little fun at Stephen's expense because there was no way she could pass up such a golden opportunity to do so.
"That sounds like a great idea Stephen but do you think you can handle such a task all by yourself?" She teased cheekily.

He rolled his stormy blue eyes and gave her a mock exasperated look.

"Oh har, har, har, you think you are so very funny don't you? Yes I think I can handle it." He snarked back playfully.

She couldn't help the giggles that escaped her. She really enjoyed his playfulness. It made her feel a lot better.

"Oh I know I'm funny. You left me such a great opening how could I pass it up?" She giggled.

He continued to look at her with mock exasperation and she continued to giggle to him until she felt a bout of fatigue coming on. She knew that he could sense it. The look on his face went from playfully exasperated to tender and affectionate.

"Sweetheart, I can sense that you are becoming fatigued would you like me to take her now?" He asked gently.

She wrinkled her freckled nose but she nodded. She let out a soft sigh; she hated feeling like this it made her feel so useless. She knew that Stephen could sense how she was feeling. He sat down onto the bed facing her. The look he was giving her almost made her start crying. She adored that look. It was the one he always gave her when she was feeling down or crappy and it always made her feel better. It told her that even though things were kind of crappy now that they would eventually get better and he would make sure of it. Gently, he took her free hand in his and started rubbing circles on it with his thumb while she kept rubbing Charlie's tiny little back with the other one. His hand was large and warm and she enjoyed his ministrations very much. She could feel herself calming down a little bit.

"Oh my poor little love, I know it sucks and I'm sorry but please don't feel like you are useless. I know that napping all the time is no fun but it will help you to feel better faster. I promise you that even though it doesn't feel like it sometimes, you will continue to get better." He said reassuringly, continuing his gentle ministrations on her hand.

She gave Stephen an affectionate smile and squeezed his shaking hand gently. What Stephen just told her was exactly what she needed to hear. It wasn't fun but she would continue to get better and even though napping all the time really sucked she knew that it would really help the process along and she really wanted to start really feeling like herself sooner rather than later.

"Thank you for telling me that, Stephen. I really needed to hear it." She murmured softly.

He continued to look at her tenderly and affectionately.

"Of course sweetheart, I will here for you anytime you need me to be." He told her affectionately.

She sighed softly, she really didn't want to give Charlie up but she knew that she really needed the nap. After placing a soft kiss on her little velvet head, she let Stephen gently take Charlie from her so she could get herself comfortable in the bed. After she did so, it took her no time at all to start drifting off. Hopefully, when she woke up she would feel a whole lot better.

_Stephen_

Adjusting Charlie so she could rest on his shoulder comfortably; Stephen watched Irena try to drift off to sleep. Oh his poor little love, he felt so bad for her. For some reason, she seemed to be very
setback prone and this really upset him because there was virtually nothing he could do to make it better for her bar being there for her in any way he could. He could sense how much of this was upsetting her and how reluctant she was to part with Charlie and that made him feel worse but he knew that the only way she would feel any better faster was to rest. Looking down at himself, he realized that he could not go to the park dressed in his 'sorcerer garb' he would attract way too much attention to himself and that was the last thing he needed or wanted for that matter.

Gently, he placed Charlie in her bassinet so he could change quickly. He also gave the cloak a magical command to disengage from him. Immediately, the cloak wasted no time in going to Irena. It wrapped itself around her protectively. He saw that Little Sapphire had made herself comfortable near her head. His eyes softened at the scene, he knew that she would be well protected while he was gone. Turning his attention back to his wardrobe dilemma, he pulled out a clean, crisp white shirt and a pair of black casual pants. He stripped out of his 'sorcerer garb' and threw on the pants and shirt. He grabbed his socks and shoes and put them on. He also rolled up his shirt sleeves to his elbows to make sure that they would remain out of his way. Satisfied that his appearance was as good as it was going to get for now, he gently took Charlie out of her bassinet and left the bedroom to go and get her ready for their little adventure at the park. Entering Charlie's nursery, he decided the first order of business was to check her little bum. Since she just had a bottle of formula, he knew that there was a good chance that she would probably be wet in the very least. Gently, he placed Charlie down on her change table and undid the snaps of her little sleeper. He opened her diaper and sure enough she was in fact wet. After he got her into a dry diaper, he changed out her sleeper for a warmer one. Once he decided that she was dressed warm enough, he made sure to grab a couple other things he would need. This was his first time leaving the Sanctum with Charlie and he wanted to make sure that he had everything that he needed with him. He double checked everything that he had and then decided that he was good to go. He could only hope that she would hold off on pooping while they were out. He gently picked up Charlie off of her change and cuddled her close.

"Are you ready for our little adventure, my little treasure?" He cooed softly to her.

Looking up at him with big blue eyes, she gurgled back at him and began sucking on her little fingers. His eyes softened and he caressed the side of her little face tenderly. For the briefest moment, he let his mind wonder to what his life would have been like had he not been in that accident. He would have never found Kamar-Taj and learned the mystic arts. He would have never become the next sorcerer supreme and Tony would have never come to him for help and he would have never met Irena. He would have remained a royal arrogant asshole probably for the rest of his life. He couldn't even imagine such a life without Charlie or Irena now. The thought sent a violent shudder through him. His sudden change in emotions caused Charlie to fuss a little bit and he soothed her.

"Shh, you're okay, daddy is here." He murmured softly.

Immediately, he tried to banish the thoughts from his mind. He had to remind himself that there was no need to think such things, they did nothing but mess with his emotions. He had momentarily forgotten that he shared a familial bond with Charlie. He knew that she could sense his emotions to some degree and tried to level them out as quickly as he could. After he managed to get his emotions to return to normal, it took no time at all for him to get Charlie to calm down. After she had calmed down enough, he decided that it was time to leave her nursery and get their little adventure started. Before he went to the foyer of the Sanctum with Charlie, he made a pit stop at the kitchen to retrieve a bottle of formula. He knew that he would have to feed her at some point during their journey through the park. He also decided that he would send Wong to get another can of formula before he left the Sanctum with Charlie. It was amazing how fast they were going through it. Satisfied that he was sure that he finally had everything that he needed, it was time to get the show on the road. He could only hope that everything went as smoothly as he hoped it would.
In The Library

Wong

Wong was in his hidey hole fidgeting restlessly. He just couldn't help it. Ever since he came back from the pharmacy, everything had been all messed up. Thankfully, he managed to hide it from Stephen pretty well because he had so many more important things on his mind but he hadn't been so lucky with Maximus. For somebody who had been trapped in a book for the better part of 400 years, he was annoyingly perceptive when it came to certain things but thankfully he had managed to find a way to shut him up. He usually didn't resort to stuff like this but he was desperate. This situation was hard enough for him to figure out without Maximus making it harder on him. He decided to use a little bit of blackmail. One night, he caught him coming out of Stephen and Irena's bedroom and managed to corner him into telling him what he was doing. It turned out that he had put protection wards all over the bedroom without telling anybody because he had a reputation to uphold and heaven forbid that anybody found out that he had a huge soft spot for Irena and now Charlie as well. Not only had he put up these wards but he had been returning every night since to make they sure that they remained up and were functioning properly. He told Maximus that he would have no problem telling Stephen and Irena what he had been up to at night and that shut him up very quickly.

He let out a long sigh, just what was he going to do about this crazy situation? The logical part of him demanded that he just forget about her and let that be that but he found that he didn't want to do that at all. Those big green eyes of hers were seared into his mind and he couldn't get over what it felt like to feel her emotions. God, he didn't even know what to do with himself, since when did he care about this stuff anyway? There was also the fact that she was totally and completely human. She didn't know anything about the mystic arts. How could he in good consciousness bring her into such a magical mess?

He continued to inwardly lament to himself until he was suddenly jolted from his crappy thoughts by a familiar magical pull. Oh, crap. Stephen was trying to call him magically. He swore that some deity up there hated his guts.

'Here we go again.' He thought to himself.

He left library and went to go and find Stephen. He found Stephen in the foyer of the Sanctum and he seemed to be fighting with Charlie's stroller. He was a little bit shocked that Stephen was actually trying to attempt to take Charlie out on his own without Irena. He had to admit that Stephen had taken to being a father extraordinarily well considering what he used to be like and it was pretty amazing to watch and pretty funny too, he would never admit that out loud though. He continued to watch Stephen try to fight with the stroller with his free hand while holding Charlie protectively in his other arm. It was like a train wreck he just couldn't look away from it. He covered his mouth to keep a snigger of laughter from escaping him. If Stephen found out that he was watching him and almost giggling at him like a little school girl he was a dead man.

Finally, Stephen gave up on getting the stroller open manually. He watched him turn to Charlie and whisper something that suspiciously sounded like "This is between you and me and don't tell your mother" and then he waved his free hand over the stroller. It magically popped open and he gently placed Charlie inside of it. He decided that now would be the best time to make his presence known. He stepped forward and cleared his throat gently. Stephen turned to face him and waved him over. He walked over to see what Stephen needed struggling to keep his face straight.

"Hey Stephen, did you need help with something?" He asked, trying to keep his face from twitching.

Stephen gave him a look but nodded. He knew that he just dodged a bullet there.
"Yes, I need you to go and get me another can of formula from the pharmacy and a couple of other things." He requested.

"I know I am asking a lot of you, I'm sorry." He added.

At the prospect of going back to the pharmacy and possibly seeing Rosie once more, he completely forgot all about Stephen's struggle with the stroller and felt his emotions try to go haywire in a totally different way. He had to get a hold of himself before Stephen figured out that something wasn't quite right. He causally waved him off.

"Sure, it's really no problem at all." He told Stephen, trying to keep his voice level.

Stephen quirked a brow at him but thankfully didn't say anything. He inwardly let out a breath of relief.

"Alright, thank you again for the help; I really appreciate it more than you could ever know."

Stephen told him gratefully.

Again, he casually waved him off. He had to get out of there before he messed up royally and Stephen figured out what was going on with him. He quickly left Stephen to his own devices and went to the middle of the foyer to open up a portal. He wasted no time in entering it and then popping out of it into an alley on the other side. He ran a hand through his short cropped hair. That was far too close; he could sense that Stephen knew that something wasn't quite right with him but thankfully was unable to pinpoint exactly what it was yet but he knew it would be a matter of time before he figured it out. He knew the right thing to do would be to just put a stop to it. He knew that he should just go in there and get the stuff for Stephen and leave the place as fast as he could. For all he knew, she wouldn't even be working today but he knew that he wasn't THAT lucky. He sighed, knew that it was pointless to think he could just go in there get Stephen's stuff and then leave. As soon as he felt her emotions he would be sucked in once more.

Leaving the alley way, he approached the pharmacy and entered the building. In an instant he could feel her and he inwardly shuddered, her emotions felt so happy. She was at the till pricing merchandise and dancing to the music that was playing from the radio that sat next to her. Her wavy blond hair was half up and half down today and it was bouncing along with the movements she made. God, how he wished that the floor would just open up and swallow him whole. He needed to distract himself with…something. He forced himself to turn away from her and he picked up a basket by the door. He left the front of the store and went the baby aisle. He started picking out what he needed. When was about halfway done, he could sense her right next to him and supressed the urge to let out a surprised squeak.

She looked at him with big, warm green eyes and smiled at him.

"Well hello again." She said warmly.

He felt this throat go dry at the look she was giving him.

"Um hi, I just um came back to pick up a few more things." He explained awkwardly.

She let out a musical little giggle and it caused a jolt of emotion to run through his system. Oh god, what WAS wrong with him?

"Is that so, if I didn't know any better I would say that you were the daddy of this baby. Uncles aren't usually this helpful." She teased gently.

Immediately, he felt his face heating up at her assumption. Again, he fought to keep his voice from
jumping up an octave as he spoke.

"NO! I mean no, I assure you that it IS my sister's baby. I work very closely with the baby's father and we are pretty good friends. Nope, I am not a dad, just good ol' Uncle Wong." He told her, he could feel himself getting even more flustered.

He watched her smile get bigger and it felt like he was going to melt into the ground at any second.

"Wong! So that's your name! I like that name." She giggled.

Oh god, he just realized that she was teasing him like that on purpose in order to find out what his name was. He could sense that she really genuinely wanted to get to know him and thought that he was cute. Why did that make him feel both great and like crap at the same time? Crap, he was so screwed on so many different levels and just what in the HELL was he going to do about it?

At Central Park

Stephen

Sitting on a park bench, Stephen fed Charlie lost in his thoughts. Something was most definitely going on with Wong. In all his years of knowing Wong, he had never seen him act so out of sorts before. He was always so serious about everything. If he didn't know any better, Wong was acting like a man with a huge crush on somebody but that was impossible. He had asked Wong multiple times if he would ever find somebody and settle down. He always got the same response back. He didn't have time for that stuff and wasn't interested in finding somebody because he had more important things to with his life than 'settle down.' If that was truly the case then why was he acting so weird? Shaking out of his thoughts, he looked down at Charlie who was thoroughly enjoying her bottle.

"Charlie, your uncle is a weirdo." He murmured softly to her.

As he continued to feed Charlie, he noticed that every time a woman passed him they would give him a weird look that he didn't quite understand and their emotions seemed all messed up like they were all warm and fuzzy or something. Each time a lady gave him such a look, he would give them a polite half smile back of course but he didn't understand what was going on. Was he getting THAT old that he didn't understand how women worked anymore? What was so special about a father feeding his daughter? Or did he have something on his face or in his teeth? He looked back down at Charlie who was looking up at him with her big blue eyes. He stroked the side of her small face softly.

"Charlie, does daddy something on his face or in his teeth? What is going on with these ladies?" He continued to murmur to her softly.

After he finished feeding Charlie, he shifted her so she was resting against his shoulder so he could burp her. As he did so, he continued to get more looks as more ladies passed him by. He decided that when he was finished burping Charlie that it was time to go. When he had the chance, he was most definitely going ask Irena about the strange looks there was no doubt about that. He finished burping Charlie and gently placed her back into her stroller. He made sure she was covered up good so she would stay warm. He got up from the bench and placed the empty bottle into the stroller's cup holder and left the park.

He leisurely made his way back to his Sanctum and entered the magical building. After letting the door close behind him, he went to take Charlie out of her stroller and saw that she had fallen asleep. His stormy blue eyes softened and he watched her sleep for a moment. He made sure he took extra
I didn't accidentally wake her up. She let out a small yawn and stretched a little bit against his shoulder but didn't wake up. He breathed a small sigh of relief. He knew that it was way past time to go and check up on Irena so he left the foyer of the sanctum and went to his and Irena's bedroom. He cracked opened the door and sure enough Irena was still sleeping soundly with her cloak all wrapped around her.

He gave her a tender look and decided that it was time for him and Charlie to join her for a bit. He decided that he wanted some afternoon cuddle time with his girls. Keeping a protective hold on Charlie, he kicked off his shoes and crawled into bed with Irena. He readjusted Charlie so she could lie more comfortably against his shoulder. Irena tried to curl around him and she let out a soft sigh. He let out a soft sigh of his own and he wrapped his free arm around her. He felt himself relax and his eyes drift shut. As much he was enjoying this, he really hoped that Irena got back on her feed sooner rather than later. He hated seeing his sweet little love so miserable.

One Week Later

Irena

It had taken almost a whole week but Irena finally felt normal once more. She hoped to never feel that bad again in a long, long time. It felt so good to be up, fully functioning and dressed in real clothes. It was just a maternity top with stars on it and a pair of black leggings because her body still wasn't back to normal from giving birth and pair of mismatched socks but it was actual clothes and not pajamas for a change. It felt so good to be back to normal. She was so happy to be able to nurse Charlie once more too. Of course Stephen still fed her bottles at night so that she could catch a little more sleep. It was something that she had come to accept and that she enjoyed now. She so enjoyed watching Stephen bond with Charlie and she knew how much Stephen enjoyed feeding her.

Now that she was a hundred percent better, she could concentrate on other things too like the stupid door and key. It had been weighing heavily on her mind and she knew that had to start dealing with it sooner rather than later. She was currently training with Maximus in the library while Stephen was watching Charlie. Now that she was proficient at activating the spell that Maximus, Wong and Stephen made for her, Maximus had taught her how to summon the dark key. It took a lot of practice but now she could do without becoming lost to the pull.

Now that she could summon the key, Maximus was teaching her how to summon the door to the dark dimension. From what Maximus explained to her, the entrance to the dark dimension looked more like a door instead of a portal and it was very hard to summon. He was giving her a very stern look, she knew that this was something that she had to pay close attention to.

"Alright little girl, I am going to summon the entrance to the dark dimension. Please pay close attention to what I am doing and don't do anything unless I tell you to. Are you ready?" He told her seriously.

Knowing that this was a very serious thing, she gave him her full attention and nodded.

"Yes Maximus, I'm ready. I promise not to do anything unless you tell me to." She promised.

He looked at her approvingly.

"Good, now stand back and watch carefully." He ordered softly.

She did as she was told and watched him make a series of unfamiliar hand movements as if he was going to open up a portal but instead of a portal opening up something else happened. A purple door started materializing from the ground. It was crackling with dark magic; she didn't like the feeling
that was emanating from it. It looked like something out of a horror movie. She looked at Maximus incredulously.

"This is what the entrance to the dark dimension looks like?" She asked Maximus incredulously.

Maximus rolled his electric green eyes at her incredulousness.

"Yes, this is the entrance to the dark dimension. Not every entrance to every realm is a portal." He told her like he was talking to small child.

She made a face. She hated it when he did that. He always babyed her and it was frustrating as hell. Yes she just had a baby and yes she had gotten sick but she didn't think that made her an invalid. This job was her destiny, it was what she was meant to do but how could she learn to do it properly when he babyed her so much all of the time? She really wanted to tell him what she thought of him babying her so much but she decided against it. Maximus lecturing her was just as bad as him babying her. She decided that she wanted to check out what she was up against instead. She got closer to the door and the dark magic crackling from it was like nothing she had ever seen before. It made her feel weird. Before she could do much else, Maximus sent the door back from wherever it came more. She gave him a questioning look.

"So I take it we aren't going in there today are we?" She questioned.

He gave her a look that told her the answer to her question was 'absolutely not'.

"No, you are nowhere near ready for that step yet." He said, the tone of his voice indicating that there was no room for argument.

She frowned, she wanted to put up a fight, she was just so sick of being treated like she had no idea what she was doing. She was so frustrated that she couldn't help the words that spilled from her mouth.

"When will I be ready? If you keep babying me like this how will I ever be ready to do anything that I am destined to do?" She snapped angrily.

It was Maximus' turn to give her an incredulous look.

"Excuse me? I am babying you because you are tasked with a job that is the definition of hell and I want to you to be prepared for it." He snapped right back to her.

She glared at him but said nothing because she knew that he was right. This job WAS the very definition of hell but she was desperate show him that she could handle it and that he didn't have to baby her so much. She wanted to prove him wrong so badly. She COULD do this.

She would enter that realm with or without him.
To have Trouble with Darkness and Other Things

Chapter Notes

A/N: Hi everybody! Since this weekend is a long weekend for me I thought I would drop you all and update! First things first, like always I have to thank everybody who left me kudos on here especially since the last update if you all could continue to do so I will be forever grateful!

Note: Okay so this chapter is all fun and games…not really. This is Irena's real honest to god foray into the dark dimension. Again, because there really are no descriptions in the MCU on what exactly it looks like I look some liberties. My inner horror movie nerd and I had a little bit of fun with it. If anybody has anything to add or would like to see again please don't hesitate to let me know!

In The Dark Dimension

Irena

Irena realized that she made an awful mistake. She somehow managed to summon the door to the dark dimension. She entered the door without thinking so desperate to prove Maximus wrong and now she was lost in the dark dimension. In her haste, she had forgotten one very important thing that Maximus had explained to her during their training earlier. Maximus told her that the appearance of the dark dimension changed based on an individual's fears. It looked different for everybody. Looking around, she realized that it was playing very heavily on her anxiety. She was stuck in a giant maze with mirrors everywhere. It was hard to tell whether she was coming or going. She tried to keep from showing any fear because she knew that it would make everything so much worse. She could do nothing but keep moving forward. It felt like she was stuck in chaos and it was driving her crazy.

She continued moving forward until she suddenly sensed something. It felt very familiar to her and not in a good way. She looked up and saw faceless ones crawling down the walls of the maze. It was clear that she wasn't doing a good enough job controlling her fear and panic and they could sense it. They were all shrieking loudly and it was hurting her ears. She was trapped, completely surrounded by faceless ones. She summoned her fans; she didn't know how she was going to fight them all but she had little choice. As she prepared herself to fight, she sensed something else that didn't feel evil. Whatever it was, it was poking at her mind and trying to talk to her.

Suddenly, a voice spoke inside of her head. It wasn't her 'mother' but it was female and she could sense that wasn't evil.

"Listen to me; I can help you find the way out. You cannot fight, you must run!" It whispered.

For a moment she hesitated, she didn't know whether or not she should listen to the voice but what other choice did she have? She didn't want to be trapped in the place and eaten alive by the faceless ones. She thought about Charlie and Stephen and a huge jolt of emotion rippled through her. God, she couldn't believe what a selfish idiot she was. She couldn't leave Charlie without a mother and Stephen would literally waste away because they were so completely bonded to each other. She
thought of Maximus and she felt even worse. As annoying as it was, Maximus had been 'babying' her because he wanted her to be as prepared as much as possible to do this job from hell. He did it because he cared about her even though he would never admit it out loud.

She decided to listen to the voice; she had to get out of this place in one piece.

"Okay, I'm listening!" She told the voice inside of her head.

She could sense that the presence or voice, whatever it was, was happy with her response.

"Good, now run and I will tell you which way to go!" The voice instructed inside of her head.

She did what the voice told her without hesitation and ran. She dispatched all of the faceless ones that were blocking her way and didn't look back. This was her only chance of escaping this hell hole and she knew it and she wasn't about to mess it up.

**Back in the Sanctum**

*Maximus*

Maximus sighed. He just could not understand the attitude that Irena insisted on giving him about 'babying' her as she put it. Just what would it take to get her to understand just how dangerous this burden that was forced to bear actually was? He hated reminding himself of the fact but she was the last part Cesrine that he had and it would probably destroy what was left of him if he lost her. He couldn't save Cesrine and it was something that he lived with every day of his un-dead life. He wasn't able to save Cesrine but he would be damned if he let the same thing happen to Irena. He ran his hand through his silvery hair; he supposed he should sit Irena down and try to have a talk with her. She HAD to know that this was no laughing matter. She had a daughter and a bond-mate who needed her and couldn't be without her. He shuddered to think what would happen if Stephen lost Irena. He of all people knew what happened when the bond-mate of a sorcerer dies. He would never ever admit it out loud but he never ever wanted or hoped to see Stephen have to go through something so awful.

He shook himself from his thoughts not liking the road that they were heading down. He would make sure that something like that never happened. Currently, he was floating to Stephen and Irena's bed room to check his wards. He still couldn't BELIEVE that Wong somehow managed to figure out what he was doing. Apparently, he was starting to lose his touch in his old age. Now he was forced to keep his mouth shut about Wong's little crush. He couldn't help but inwardly laugh when he thought about it. It turned out all it took to bring 'hard-ass' Wong to his knees was a sunny little green eyed woman with long, flowing blond locks. It was just too much and he couldn't have any fun with it without fear of being totally humiliated in return. There was no way he could pass such an opportunity up, he would figure out way around this little roadblock one way or another but right now he had more important things to take care of. He had to make sure that those wards were still functional.

Just as he reached Stephen's bedroom door, he could suddenly sense something dark but familiar and his electric green eyes became huge. There was no way. He could sense that the door to the dark dimension was open but how was that even possible? Unless, oh no…it couldn't be could it? Could Irena have somehow managed to summon the door to the dark dimension? He didn't think it was even possible but he also wouldn't put it passed her to be able to do it either. She was different from Cesrine in so many was but in others they were one and the same. They were both extremely stubborn and they both shared the extreme need to prove themselves. It was what got Cesrine into so much trouble all of those years ago and it was getting Irena into the same trouble now. He bolted from his position in front of Stephen and Irena's bedroom and got to the library as fast as he could.
He entered the library and sure enough the door to the dark dimension was in the middle of the room wide open and crackling with dark energy. Irena was nowhere to be found. He sought out her magical signature and couldn't sense her anywhere in the sanctum. He immediately began to panic.

He knew that Wong was in the library how in the HELL did she manage to get passed him? He looked inside of Wong's hidey hole and found out how quite quickly. Wong was meditating and he knew that there was no way Wong would have sensed or heard anything. Why did he have to pick the worst time ever to meditate? He knew that it was bad to interrupt a sorcerer while they were meditating but this was an emergency.

"Wong! WAKE UP! Why were you not paying closer attention to Irena? She is now traipsing around the dark dimension because of you!" He yelled loudly.

At the sudden intrusion, Wong's dark eyes snapped open and he jumped so high from the shock of suddenly being disturbed that he nearly smashed the top of his head into the roof of his hidey hole.

Wong gave him the stink eye at the accusation and let out an annoyed noise.

"What is your problem Maximus? How was I to know what she was doing? I was MEDITATING!" Wong yelled angrily.

It was his turn to be annoyed, he wasn't stupid. Wong was meditating far more than normal hoping that it would help to even out his emotions concerning his pharmacy girl because he was steadily refusing to acknowledge that he in fact shared her feelings and it was causing his emotions to constantly go haywire.

"Well, I wonder why you have to meditate so damn much, you twitterpatted fool!" He yelled back just as angrily.

Wong glared at him in a way that should have sent him six feet under but he just couldn't be bothered to care. He needed to get Irena out of the dark dimension for it was too late and she became trapped there. Wong was about to snap back and he held up his hand. He didn't have time for this, Irena was far more important.

"We don't have time for this! Just stay here while I go and get Stephen in case she manages to get herself out of there!" He ordered.

He didn't even bother waiting for Wong's response before he left; he needed to get Stephen now.

Stephan

Stephen let out a relaxed sigh. He was currently enjoying some daddy-daughter bonding time with Charlie while Irena finished up her training session with Maximus. Napping with Charlie was fast becoming one of his favorite things to do with her. Especially when he tucked her into his tunic, he really enjoyed doing that and he could sense the she seemed to enjoy it too. He looked down at Charlie and gave her a tender look. She was sleeping soundly tucked into his tunic. She let out a small little yawn and stretched out her tiny little limbs. He gently stroked the side of her little face and dropped a soft kiss on top of her velvet head. He was so enjoying his bonding time with her that he failed to sense that Maximus was close by until he suddenly exploded through the wall across from him.

He looked at Maximus with shock; he could instantly sense that something was not right at all.

"Maximus, whatever is the matter?" He asked in shock.
Maximus looked like he didn't even where or how to start explaining what the matter was.

"It's Irena! I don't know how she did it, but she somehow managed to summon the door to the dark dimension! She's trapped in there and only you can hope to help me get her out! There is no telling what state we will find her in!" Maximus explained quickly.

He stormy blue eyes widened and his blood ran cold. The thought of losing Irena to that hell hole caused him to panic. How in the hell did even manage to summon the bloody thing in the first place? He had to get to her fast; he gently removed Charlie from inside of his tunic and quickly grabbed her blanket from her bassinet. He would have Wong look after Charlie while he and Maximus tried to get Irena back. He could only hope they got to her in time. Just what in god's green earth had she been thinking doing something so insanely stupid?

Back In the Dark Dimension

Irena

Irena ran and ran; she followed every direction that the voice gave her dispatching any faceless ones that got in her way. Suddenly, without much warning the entire appearance of the dark dimension changed. The endless maze and mirrors suddenly vanished and were replaced with nothingness and bunch of random debris. She remembered something else that Maximus had explained to her during their training session. When more than one individual entered the dark dimension at one time, the realm had a very difficult time picking out individual fears to play on and because of this the realm couldn't take a proper appearance. So it always took the form of nothingness with a bunch of debris floating through it. She knew that this meant that there was more than one individual in the dark dimension with her now. She knew that without a doubt in her mind that it had to be Stephen and Maximus coming to try and find her. She pushed herself harder, she had to find them. Soon enough she began to feel both Maximus and Stephen's magical signatures and she almost wept with relief. It was clear that the voice in her head, whatever it was, could sense it too.

"That's it, you are almost there! Keep going and don't stop running!" The voice encouraged inside of her head.

She did what the voice told her to and kept on running. She was almost there and she refused to give up now. She could sense that Maximus and Stephen's magical signatures were getting stronger. Sure enough, she could just barely make them out and breathed out a massive sigh of relief. She couldn't stop running quite yet but she knew that she would make it out of this awful place in one piece at the very least. She had no idea how she would have found her way back without the voice inside of her head helping her. She didn't know what the voice was but she knew that it was more than just a voice it was some kind of entity and it wasn't evil like the rest of the entities in this crappy place. She just had to know what it was.

"Thank you for helping me escape this awful place. What are you exactly?" She asked the voice curiously inside of her head.

"I…I don't exactly know what I am." The voice murmured softly inside of her head.

She hesitated for a moment not exactly sure what to make of such a weird answer. The entity seemed to be able to sense this and gave her a gentle nudge.

"You must leave this place now; we will eventually meet again soon." The voice told her cryptically before leaving her mind all together.
She continued to run until she reached Maximus and Stephen. She could sense just how angry and disappointed they were with her and she felt awful. Stephen wouldn't even look at her and she felt her heart drop into her stomach. She let Maximus and Stephen wordlessly escort her from the dark dimension and back into the library.

**In The Library**

**Irena**

When she finally got back into the library, she nearly collapsed onto the floor. She could feel that the scar that was left on her shoulder from when she was bitten by the faceless one all those months ago was burning terribly. Because the scar was the result of an injury caused by a dark creature, there probably was some residual dark magic trapped in there. She was pretty sure that it was simply having some kind of reaction to being trapped in a place filled with dark magic for as long as she was.

She chose to ignore the burning in her shoulder for the moment, she was pretty sure that it would probably go away on its own anyway and she had way more important things to worry about at the moment. Stephen still wouldn't even look at her and she could sense just how disappointed he was with her and she could sense just how angry Maximus was with her. Even Wong, who was holding Charlie, looked just as disappointed in her as Stephen did. She didn't even know what to do with herself or what to say. Looking at Charlie, she saw that she was thankfully sleeping like a log in Wong's arms. She couldn't believe that she did something so stupid and selfish.

Before she could even figure out what to do or say, Stephen gently took Charlie from Wong's arms and wordlessly left the room. He didn't even acknowledge her at all. His disappointment in her made her feel sick. The bond was begging her to go after him and fix it but she knew that she couldn't just yet. After Stephen left, Wong also disappeared back into his hidey hole wordlessly and she was left alone with Maximus.

Immediately, he started tearing into her and yelling at her angrily.

"What were you thinking? What in the HELL possessed you to do something so STUPID you selfish twit?" He yelled angrily.

She could help but flinch at the loudness of his voice and being called a selfish twit. She did deserve that though.

"Do you not care about your daughter and Stephen? You could have been trapped in that awful place for the rest of your life or worse killed. Why would you put your daughter and your bond-mate such a horrible thing? Do you know what would happen to them?" He continued to yell at her.

She felt so much shame that she couldn't even look at him anymore. She could feel the tears welling up in the corners of her mismatched eyes.

"I'm so sorry." She murmured so softly that it was barely audible.

She could hear Maximus sighing softly from somewhere above her.

Suddenly, she felt the softest of caresses on the top of her head and her head snapped up. She looked at Maximus with large eyes. He was caressing the top of her head so softly that she could barely feel the touch. She didn't even know that he could do that. He was staring at her with a look in his electric green eyes that cracked her heart open.

"I don't know how you managed to find your way back but thank every god above. You are the only
thing I have left of her." He murmured gently back to her.

She looked away once more, she couldn't help it. She knew what he was referring too and it made her feel a hundred times worse.

"I'm sorry." She repeated softly.

She could hear Maximus letting out another soft sigh. She could sense that some of his anger at her had dissipated a bit and for that she was grateful.

"I know your daughter and Stephen need you now. We will discuss this situation more at later date." He told her, effectively dismissing her.

She nodded and left the library. She slowly walked to her and Stephen's bedroom. She was internally panicking. Could she somehow managed to fix the damage she did Stephen's trust in her? She remembered the huge fight that she and Stephen had about trust all of those months ago and she could feel the tears trying to start up again. She thought about how hard she worked to put her complete trust in him and what does she do? Destroy all the trust he had in her. Why did she do something so stupid? She reached her and Stephen's bedroom and she began to sense his disappointment in her once more. Again, the bond was just screaming at her to do whatever she could to fix it. She began to feel physically ill. She entered the bedroom and saw that Stephen was hovering over Charlie's bassinet.

As soon as he sensed her there, he turned to face her and she hated the look that he held in his stormy blue eyes. They were filled with such disappointment, instead of acknowledging her and he grabbed her by the wrist and forced her to go to Charlie's bassinet. Charlie way lying inside and wide awake. She was sucking away on her little pink, sparkly pacifier and kicking her little limbs. She had a handful of her pink blanket in one of her tiny little fists. She could feel big, fat tears streaming down her face.

"What were you thinking? She needs you! I need you! Do you not understand what would happen if we lost you? I am so disappointed that you even THOUGHT of doing such a stupid thing in the first place! I thought you were better than that!" He hissed.

She turned in his direction but still couldn't bring herself to look up at him. She couldn't even force herself to say anything but she knew that Stephen could sense her emotions through the bond. He reached up and gently wiped way her tears and she relished the touch.

"I know, I know." He murmured softly.

Before she could even react, she found herself in his arms and she felt him weave one of his hands through her messy tresses. She immediately nuzzled into his chest and sighed.

"Please promise me that you will never EVER do something so stupid again." He ordered softly.

"I promise." She murmured back without hesitation.

He let out a sigh of relief. She knew that he could sense that she meant her promise one hundred percent. She would never do something so stupid ever again. She never wanted to go through something like this ever again in her life. He bent his head slightly and kissed her tenderly. She savored the kiss and made a noise of protestation when separated from her slowly. He chuckled softly at her.

"Good, now go take a bath. You need to relax from all the stress you put your body through or you won't be able to sleep tonight." He suggested gently.
She agreed whole heartedly with his suggestion.

Before she went into the bathroom to put his idea into practice, turned around so she was facing Charlie's bassinet once more and she bent down to place a loving kiss on the top of her velvet head. She stroked the side of her little face.

"Mama's so sorry." She murmured softly to her.

Charlie let out a little gurgle in response and tried to kick her tiny little limbs harder. She gave Charlie a gentle and affectionate look and stood up slowly. She still felt awful and that bath was calling her name loudly.

**Stephen**

Stephen watched Irena disappear into the bathroom and sighed. He was still having difficulty understanding what just transpired and why she would do such a completely stupid thing. He was just so glad that she managed to somehow find her way out of that god-awful place. How she managed to do it was a complete mystery but he would ask her about that later. He thought about the way that Maximus and been training Irena and wondered if he should have a conversation with him later as well. He knew how Irena functioned. Maximus probably accidentally made her feel like she couldn't do the job she had been destined to do and she felt that she had to prove him wrong. He knew that he was just trying to help her but Irena probably hadn't seen it that way. It was the only reason that she would attempt to do something so insanely stupid.

He decided that she needed a break from all things magical and a great idea popped into his head. They had been talking about taking Charlie to the tower for quite some time and he knew that this would be a great way to keep her out of trouble or rather keep her from getting into trouble again. He grabbed his phone off of the little table next to his bed and scrolled through his contacts and found Tony's number. He tapped it and then tapped talk.

It only took a couple of rings for Tony to pick up the phone. His loud voice filtered through the receiver.

"Merlin, what can I do you for?" Tony asked jovially.

He couldn't help but make a face at being called 'Merlin' but he ignored the stupid nickname.

"Hello Tony, Irena and I would really like to bring Charlie to the tower so everybody could meet her. Is alright for us to do so tomorrow?" He asked.

Tony laughed and he fought the urge to roll his eyes. What was so funny about such a question?

"Oh Merlin, you can't fool me. Irena IS a Stark after all and my daughter and I know what you are up to. You are trying to keep her out of trouble. Sure, come on over in the afternoon and Pepper and I will have something nice set up. Everybody wants to meet the little stinker anyway." Tony laughed.

Before he could even respond, Tony hung up on him. Maybe that was a good thing, if Tony ever found out that she already got into trouble and he was trying to keep her from getting into trouble again he would try and obliterate him off of the face of the planet. He didn't need this undoing all the hard work he did getting Tony to finally trust him to some degree. Placing his phone back onto the little table next to his bed, he got up and checked on Charlie. He was very happy to see that she had fallen asleep. He decided that it was time to join Irena in the bath.

He opened the bathroom door and sucked in a breath at the sight before him. Irena relaxing in the tub with her eyes closed and her lips slightly parted. It reminded him so much of the first time he ever
saw her like this and he couldn't help the jolt of arousal and possessiveness that ran through his system at the sight. She was so beautiful and HIS. He knew that Irena would be able to feel it through the bond and her eyes suddenly snapped open. As soon as she realized that he was there watching her, she let out a little squeak and tried to cover herself. He could sense her embarrassment and her shame for feeling the need to do it in the first place.

He gave her a gentle and affectionate look and started stripping so he could get into the bath tub with her.

"Sweetheart, whatever is the matter? I have seen you naked tons of times since you've given birth it's okay." He said soothingly.

He got into the tub and wasted no time in coming to her. He ran his large hands up and down her arms in an effort to sooth her some more. He could sense that she was having difficulty trying to explain to him why she felt so ashamed.

"Stephen, I know that you have but I have stretch marks and baby weight. I know it's not the most attractive thing ever." She tried to explain timidly.

At her timid explanation he understood what was bothering her now. He would spend the rest of their lives showing her how beautiful she was if he had to. The stretch marks and baby weight were simply proof of how strong she was. They were proof of what she went through to carry their little treasure for eight and half months and to him they made her even more beautiful than she already was. He loved all of her.

"Oh my sweet little love, please don't be ashamed of your baby weight and stretch marks. They are proof of strong you are. You are beautiful and I love all of you." He murmured softly.

He bent down and gave her scorching kiss to prove his point. She responded immediately and he could feel his arousal increase tenfold. He wanted so badly to prove to her that he meant every word that he told her. Before he could, she pulled away momentarily and gave him a look filled with love.

"Thank you Stephen, I needed to hear that." She told him softly.

He gave her a tender look in return.

"You are very welcome, now come here." He growled playfully.

He pulled her flush up against himself so she could feel what she did to him. At the contact, she let out soft moan and that only served to egg him on. He bent his head back down, and gave her another searing kiss. She wrapped her legs around his waist and he backed her into one of the walls of the bathtub. She moved her hands from around his neck and threaded them in his dark tresses. He broke the kiss and began nipping at her neck playfully. Whenever he hit a sensitive spot, she would yank on his hair a little bit. She was driving him mad; he knew that he had to have her now.

However, before he could do anything, Charlie began to cry loudly. He let out an annoyed growl. 'Oh come on Charlie, can't you cut your daddy a break here?' He thought to himself, completely annoyed.

Irena pulled back from him slightly and let out a little giggle at his annoyance. She nuzzled her face into the crook of his neck and gave him a playful nip.

"Oh Stephen, she's just a baby it's not her fault don't be so annoyed. It's just a part of parenthood that we have to adjust to. Just wait a moment and she might stop." She told him gently.
He and Irena waited for a moment and it became clear that Charlie really needed them. Irena looked down at his obvious problem and then gave him a playful look. She turned the cold water on and he couldn't help the yelp that escaped him at the sudden change of temperature in the tub. He gave her a playful glare and she giggled at him. She got out of the tub to go to Charlie and he couldn't help but watch her like a hawk. She really was beautiful, one of a kind and above all HIS.

"There, maybe that'll help!" She giggled.

He looked longingly at her retreating form and then looked down at his little problem.

"It's not helping." He muttered to himself.

"I heard that!" She called from the bedroom playfully.

He couldn't help roll his stormy blue eyes at her playful remark. A part of parenthood that he had to adjust to indeed.
To Enjoy Family and Deal with Unexpected Surprises

Hey everybody here is another chapter all good to go! Sorry it took so long, I am still dealing with my downstairs neighbor and it is such bullshit but writing has been helping me deal with it quite a lot even if it does take me forever to get shit done. Alright moving on from that, I have to thank everybody who gave me kudos the last time around you all literally saved me from the brink. I was so about to give up on this story and that's the last thing I want. All I really want is for you all to enjoy this story as much as you all to enjoy Lightfire, so please, please show me that you do and leave me something on the way out! Every time somebody does it gives much such a boost and it so needed right now now like you all don't even know!

With that being said, I hope everybody enjoys this and thank you again to the people who left kudos the last time! Happy reading everybody! :)

Stephen

Stephen cracked his eyes open and stretched languidly. Immediately, he sought out Irena and was happy to see that she was still sleeping quite soundly. She was all curled around him and had her face buried into his chest. She was just about clinging to him. He let out a soft sigh, he gave her a tender look and pushed her messy hair out of her face. He could sense just how exhausted she still was from her ordeal yesterday. He didn’t even like thinking about it but he couldn’t help but wonder just how in god’s green earth she managed to find her way to the entrance without either he or Maximus to guide her. He knew that there was no way that she could have done it alone. Something or someone had to have helped her somehow. He found this extremely odd considering that place was filled with evil entities. He no idea that anything remotely good could even exist in such a place.

It was bothering him immensely not knowing exactly what happened to her while she was trapped in that hell hole. He decided that he would talk to her about as soon as she was up and functional. If there was something else trapped in there that was good, he wanted to know about it and figure out just what it was. As he sat and contemplated just how he was going to ask her such a thing, he could sense that Charlie was beginning to wake up and that she was hungry. For a moment, he wondered whether or not he should just wake Irena so she could nurse Charlie or just feed her a bottle of formula himself. He decided that it would probably be a better idea to wake up Irena so she could nurse Charlie. He knew that it was something that she really enjoyed doing.

Before he woke up Irena, he decided that he would get up and take Charlie to her nursery to check her little bum first because it would give Irena a little more time to sleep before he had to wake her up. It took a few minutes, but he managed to pry her off of himself without waking her up. He got out of bed and just watched her sleep for a moment. When they were in the tub the night previous and he called her beautiful he really did mean it. He couldn’t help the jolt of arousal that shot through him as he thought about their interrupted activities.

A huge part of him wanted to be very naughty and crawl back into bed with her just so he could wake her up and they could continue said interrupted activities but he knew the chance of being interrupted once more was just about a hundred percent so he exhibited extreme self control and let
her continue to sleep. Looking at her affectionately, he watched her wriggle around on the bed for a moment trying desperately to find a comfortable position to sleep in without him there with her. He bent down and placed a tender kiss on her forehead. He pulled the covers up all around her so she would be a little more comfortable.

Satisfied that Irena was comfortable, he went to Charlie’s bassinet to check on her. She had woken up and was looking up at him with her big blue eyes. He looked at Charlie affectionately, he just couldn’t help but gaze at her for a bit. She was still so tiny and such a beautiful little being that was part him and part Irena. He would never stop loving her so unconditionally. He gently took her out of her bassinet and cuddled her close. She stretched and yawned against his shoulder. He placed a tender kiss onto the top of her little velvet head. As quietly as he could, he left the bedroom and took Charlie to her nursery. Entering the room, he wasted no time in gently placing Charlie onto her change table. He got to work opening the snaps on her sleeper and opened her diaper to see just what kind of damage he was dealing with this time. He had been discovering the hard way that it didn’t always stink when she pooped. Sure enough, he was met with a bit of an unpleasant surprise. He couldn’t help but shudder a little bit. He was leaps and bounds better at changing poopy diapers but still got thrown off whenever it came unexpectedly. He tried to keep his emotions as level as possible, he was trying so very hard to avoid having to get Irena to come and bail him out every time this happened.

‘Okay I can do this. I've changed tons of poopy diapers already and this is no different. Hell, I've faced a demon hell bent on destruction before. I can handle surprise poops!’ He thought to himself.

He quickly got to work before he either lost his nerve or Charlie started fussing. He wasn’t nearly as efficient as Irena but he managed to get the job done. After he finished cleaning Charlie up, he put a clean diaper on her and he could sense just how much happier she was. He also dressed her in a clean sleeper. He watched her affectionately for a moment as she sucked on her little fist and kicked her little feet. He could sense that she was hungry and he knew that it was time for him to get her back to the bedroom so Irena could nurse her. Gently, he picked Charlie up off her changing table and shifted her so she was resting comfortably against his shoulder.

He left Charlie’s nursery and went back into the bedroom. He was not at all shocked to see that Irena was up and sitting up in bed. She was trying not to snicker at him. Clearly, he hadn’t done as good a job of hiding his emotions as he thought he did. He rolled his eyes. She opened her mouth, ready to tease him and he shushed her.

“Oh, shush you!” He shushed her.

She continued to snicker at him playfully.

“But…” She giggled.

He tried to shush her once more.

“Shush!” He repeated softly.

She pouted at him but relented.

“Oh, alright but I was just going to tell you what a great job you did sticking it out!” She teased playfully.

He rolled his eyes in mock exasperation.

“Sure, you were.” He said in mock exasperation.
Irena continued to giggle playfully at him and he continued to give her a look filled with mock exasperation. Of course, he knew it was all in good fun.

He gently handed Charlie to her so she could start nursing her. As he watched her prepare to nurse Charlie, his stormy blue eyes softened and a jolt of sweet emotion ran through his system. Watching Irena with Charlie was another one of his absolute favorite things to do. He loved his little family so very much. As he continued to watch Irena with Charlie, his mind started to drift back to what happened yesterday. He didn’t even like thinking about it but he knew that he needed to know what happened to her while she was stuck in that hell hole. She was giving him a look that indicated she could sense that his emotions were a little all over the place. She gestured for him to come to her.

He did so without hesitation and sat on the bed. He made himself comfortable and curled around her protectively.

“Stephen, what’s the matter?” She asked softly.

He sighed. For a moment, he wondered how he was just going to ask her such a thing. He decided that the best way to do it would be just to ask her.

“Sweetheart, I want you tell me what happened to you while you were trapped in the dark dimension.” He requested gently.

Immediately, she stiffened at the question and he wasn’t all shocked. He knew that it wouldn’t be easy for her to explain to him what happened and have to re-live it all over again. He would try and help her any way he could.

Irena

Irena couldn’t help the shudder than ran through her at Stephen’s question. She knew that this was something that she needed to talk to him about. He needed to know what happened to her while she was stuck in the dark dimension but it was difficult to figure out how to start such a conversation. She let out a sigh and stroked Charlie’s little velvet head softly as she nursed. She felt Stephen’s large, warm hand wander underneath her tank top and start rubbing her lower back. His ministrations went a long in way in keeping her calm. She decided that the she should just try and get it over with. She knew that she would feel a ton better if she did.

“Right after I entered that hell hole, it changed on me. It turned into some kind of maze with mirrors everywhere. It was so hard to figure out which way was forward and which was back. It felt like it was constantly changing on me and I think it started feeding off my fear. No matter what I tried to do, I just couldn’t put my fear away and it started attracting the faceless ones to me. There were so many Stephen, they were crawling all over the walls of the maze and I thought I was done for. Suddenly, there was this presence inside my head. I have no idea what it was but it sounded like it was female and somehow, I knew that it was good. It led me back to the entrance where you and Maximus were. I don’t even know how it did it but it did and then you and Maximus found me. Before I got out of there I tried to ask the entity what it was but it refused to tell me. It just left but before it did it told me that we would eventually meet again soon. It was so weird.” She explained.

She could sense that Stephen was trying to process what she just explained to him. She could feel the protectiveness just oozing from him. She knew it was because of the bond and the fact that he couldn’t stop any of that stuff from happening to her and that upset him. She could also sense some curiosity bleeding through the protectiveness. It was very clear that he was curious about the entity whatever it was. She was too. Was it stuck in there and could they get it out? If it was stuck there had to be a way to free it. She could tell that Stephen was wondering the same thing. She decided to voice that question.
“Stephen, if something good is trapped in that god-awful place could we somehow find a way to free it?” She asked.

As he continued his ministrations on her lower back, Stephen let out a thoughtful noise and nodded.

“I think we should at least try to figure out what the entity is. Clearly, it is good and wants to help you. It could prove to be a very useful ally.” He said in agreement.

She nodded in agreement. As she shifted Charlie so she could burp her, an errant thought popped into her mind. She was suddenly reminded of when Maximus told her about Cesrine and how he trapped her behind the forbidden door in the dark dimension. Despite what happened to Cesrine because of the dark magic, she knew that Cesrine was good and it was the dark magic that made her evil. She wondered if it was even possibly for the entity, whatever it was, to have anything to do with Cesrine because she was trapped behind the forbidden door but she didn’t know what else it could be. There was nothing good in that place. Suddenly, she was ripped from her thoughts when Stephen stopped his ministrations on her back. She made a soft noise of protest and pouted at him. He gave her a tender look and chuckled softly.

He plucked his phone off the little night stand next to his side of the bed and checked the time. She gave him a curious look. She could sense that he was up to something.

“Sweetheart, I know all of is hard and stressful on you. I promise you that we will find out what that voice is but I know that you need a break. What do you think of taking Charlie to the tower in a little bit so everybody can meet her?” He suggested.

Immediately, she lit up at his suggestion. A break from all things magic was exactly what she needed at the moment and she really wanted everybody to meet Charlie. She knew that Stephen did too.

“Oh yes please!” She agreed happily.

He gave her an affectionate look and chuckled softly at her enthusiasm.

“I’m glad you approve, I called Tony yesterday and he told me he would set something up for this afternoon. It’s almost the afternoon already. We better start getting ourselves and Charlie ready. I am extremely curious as to what he has planned.” He explained.

She gave him an affectionate look. He was so beyond perfect to her. He knew that she needed a break and wanted to bring Charlie to the tower. So, he went through the effort of calling Tony and setting something up for her to give her a mini surprise. She honestly didn’t know just what she would do without him some days.

“You are beyond perfect, thank you so much.” She murmured softly.

She reached up and placed a gentle, lingering kiss on his lips. He wasted no time in returning the kiss. He pulled back slightly.

“You know I am and you are welcome, my little love.” He murmured back softly.

She gave him a look of mock exasperation and slapped him playfully in the chest with her free hand.

‘Leave it to Stephen to ruin such a nice little moment with his big, fat ego.’ She thought with mock exasperation.

“You are so full of yourself!” She giggled.
“And you love it!” He joked.

She rolled her mismatched eyes and shook her head. After she finished burping Charlie, she decided that it was time to get her ready for her big debut at the tower. Keeping a protective hold on Charlie, she got out of bed and Stephen also got out of bed with her. She could sense that he wanted to help her get Charlie ready for her big debut at the tower. She thought that it was absolutely adorable. Feeling just how much Stephen loved Charlie so unconditionally was one of her favorite things ever. Together she and Stephen left the bedroom and went to Charlie’s nursery. She gently handed Charlie to Stephen so he could check her little bum while she went to pick out a cute little dress for her to wear.

Even though sleepers were far more convenient, this was a special occasion and she wanted Charlie to look extra cute for it. She picked out a little pink frilly dress that Darcy had gotten her. After Darcy had found out that Charlie was a girl, she went out and bought her all kinds of girly things. Dresses, hats, sleepers and her pink sparkly pacifier. Darcy was taking her role as auntie very seriously it was adorable and hilarious at the same time.

Walking back to Stephen and Charlie with the dress, she saw that he had finished changing her bum. He was cooing to her and kissing her tiny feet. She let herself enjoy the adorable scene for a moment. She would never get enough of watching Stephen with Charlie. Sensing that she was there, Stephen turned his attention to her for a moment and gave her an affectionate look. He helped her maneuver the dress onto Charlie’s tiny little body. After they managed to get it onto her, she gently picked her up off the change table. She looked absolutely adorable in the little pink dress. She turned to Stephen to voice this.

“What do you think, daddy? Doesn’t she look adorable?” She cooed.

Stephen nodded. He gave both her and Charlie a tender look. He bent down to place a tender kiss on Charlie’s tiny velvet head.

“Undoubtedly, would you like to take Charlie back to the bedroom so you can get ready while I get the rest of her stuff together?” He suggested.

She gave him an extremely grateful look.

“I would absolutely love that, you are too good to me.” She told him gratefully.

He chuckled warmly and pressed a gentle kiss full of love onto her lips which she enjoyed thoroughly.

“Why of course I am, now go and get ready. I will be along shortly.” He murmured softly.

Looking at her a cheekily, he gave her a gentle love tap on the ass and she gave him a playfully exasperated look. She took this as her queue to get moving and left the room with Charlie. She went back to her and Stephen’s bedroom. She gently placed Charlie her bassinet. She gave Charlie her pacifier in hopes that it would help her sleep so she could have a small nap before everything went crazy. Satisfied that she was alright, she went to get herself ready. The first thing she did was go and hop in the shower. She went into the bathroom and turned the water on. As she waited for the water to get to the right temperature, she stripped out of her tank top and pyjama pants. Once the water reached the right temperature, she hopped in and cleaned herself up. After she finished up with that, she turned the shower off and hopped out. She wrapped a towel around herself then went to take care of her teeth and hair. She quickly brushed her teeth and started working on detangling the mess that was her hair.
When she was satisfied with how her hair looked, she exited the bathroom with the towel still wrapped around her. Before she picked out her outfit for the day, she went to check on Charlie and sure enough she had fallen asleep sucking away on her pacifier like she hoped that she would. Leaving Charlie to continue to sleep, she went to go and try to pick out an outfit to put on. Key word being ‘try’. This was one thing that she was still having a bit of trouble with, she still couldn’t fit into any of the clothes that she wore before she got pregnant. She knew that this was a normal thing and it didn’t make her ugly but it still bugged the crap out of her. She thought of what Stephen told her the night previous about her body and it really helped her a lot. She knew that Stephen loved her no matter what and that’s all that mattered.

Rifling through her and Stephen’s wardrobe, she pulled out a pair of stretchy black leggings and her favorite floral maternity shirt. She also grabbed some undergarments and began to get dressed. Just as she was finishing up, Stephen came into the bedroom with Charlie’s diaper bag and her baby carrier. She smiled at him. He put the stuff he was carrying onto the floor and he wasted no time in approaching her. He gave her a gentle kiss and pulled away slowly.

“Well, hello beautiful.” He murmured softly.

She let out a playful giggle. She loved it when he called her that. It made her feel so good. She knew that he could sense it.

“Well, hello to you too, handsome. You better get into the shower or we’ll be late!” She giggled.

Making a noise of agreement, Stephen parted from her slowly and went to get himself cleaned up. While he did that, she went to go and double check everything that he packed into the diaper bag. Of course, she trusted that he knew what he was doing but she wanted to make sure that they had enough of everything. This was the first time they were leaving the Sanctum with Charlie for a long period of time and she wanted to avoid having to come back because they didn’t back enough of something. Satisfied with what was in the diaper bag, she went to Charlie’s bassinet and gently took her out of it. Being careful not to accidentally wake her up, she manoeuvred her into the baby carrier and made sure to strap her in properly.

As she did this, Stephen popped out of bathroom looking as handsome as ever in nothing but a towel. She couldn’t help but let her mismatched eyes rove over his body a little bit. Stephen sensed this and gave her a cheeky look. She had the decency to look a little sheepish but it was almost impossible not to stare at him when he was in nothing but a towel. After Stephen got dressed, they decided that was time to get to the tower before they really were late. Stephen picked up Charlie in the carrier and the diaper bag. Together they exited the bedroom and walked to the foyer to the sanctum so they could open a portal. Stephen placed Charlie on the floor gently along with the diaper bag and made the required movements to open a portal. The orange portal materialized in front of them. Stephen picked up Charlie and the diaper bag once more and they entered it together.

At the Tower

Irena

She and Stephen popped out of the portal into the foyer of the Tower on the other side and immediately she bent down to check on Charlie because this was the first time she and Stephen entered a portal with her and she was happy to see that Charlie was sleeping away like a log in her carrier. They walked to the lounge doors and she was not at all shocked to see Tony and Pepper there waiting for them. Immediately, Pepper wasted no time in approaching them and she could sense that her attention was completely focused on Charlie. She gestured for Stephen to put the carrier onto the ground so Pepper could get a better look. Pepper gently took Charlie out of her carrier and started to coo and fawn over her.
“Oh Irena, she is just so precious! That little pink dress looks so adorable on her!” Pepper gushed.

She smiled softly. Pepper was just so happy and it was wonderful to feel. She could sense that Stephen felt the same.

“Thanks, Pepper.” She giggled softly.

Pepper turned to Tony so he could get a good look at Charlie in her little pink dress.

“Does grandpa Tony wanna see how cute she is?” Pepper cooed to Tony.

Tony made a face, it was clear that he was remembering when he got spit up on the last time but he relented quickly. It clear that she already had him completely wrapped around her little finger.

“Oh alright fine, just hang on a sec.” Tony relented.

Tony left momentarily and then he came back with a giant towel that covered up nearly half his body. Everybody started snickering at him and he gave everybody the stink eye.

“What? I am not taking ANY chances this time.” Tony said adamantly.

Pepper rolled her eyes. She gently handed Charlie to Tony. She let out a small little yawn and stretched against his shoulder. The look his face was one that she had never seen before until now, it was totally indescribable. He reached up and stroked the top of her velvet head softly it was like he was entranced or something it was so cute.

“Alright, I admit it. The little stinker is pretty darn cute.” He admitted softly.

She couldn’t help the snort of laughter that tried to escape her at Tony’s assessment. His behavior was so un-Tony like it was just unbelievable. She discretely pulled her phone out to record the moment so Tony couldn’t deny it later. She could sense that Tony wanted to show her off like the proud grandpa he was. She seriously wondered if he would let anybody else hold her at all today. It was just so completely adorable. She let Tony take Charlie into the lounge to show her off and she, Stephen and Pepper followed after him. She inwardly shook her head, she couldn’t believe what she just witnessed. She could sense that Stephen and Pepper felt the same. Thank god she had video proof.

Knowing that Charlie was in very good hands, she decided that she would take advantage of being baby-free for a moment and go find some food. She saw that Stephen decided to go have some manly time with Clint and Thor.

Of course, Tony had a whole buffet of food set up just like at her baby shower and she took full advantage it. After she filled up on food, she decided to go back to check up on Tony and Charlie. She saw that Charlie had somehow migrated to Bucky. She was shocked that Tony let somebody else hold her at all with the way he was holding her earlier, especially Bucky with the way their relationship was. They still just barely tolerated each other for her sake. She knew that Darcy must have had something to do with it.

She watched Bucky with Charlie and her mismatched eyes softened. He was trying to teach Steve how to hold her. Steve looked so awkward and of course Darcy was giggling away in the background. It was just so adorable to watch. She would never ever forget the first time that she met Bucky. She had overheard Tony and Steve talking about him and her curiosity had gotten the better of her. The first time she saw him, he looked so broken and sad. She knew that there was no way that could leave him like that in good consciousness. Tony tried to talk her out of helping him multiple times but she refused to listen to him. Despite what Bucky did, she knew that it was all
HYDRA’s fault and not his. She was so desperate to prove that to everybody in the tower who doubted it. Looking at him now, she was so glad that she put up the fight she did to help him. She couldn’t believe how far he has come since that day. She couldn’t ask for a better big bother and she knew that he was going to be a great uncle to Charlie. He was proving as much already.

She watched the adorable scene for a few more minutes and then she turned her attention to Stephen, Thor and Clint. She was very happy to see just how well they seemed to be getting along now. Something must have happened while they were putting together Charlie’s nursery, whatever it was it really helped. Suddenly, Clint decided to leave the conversation with Stephen and Thor and approached Bucky and Steve. Clearly, uncle Clint wanted his turn with Charlie now. It took a moment but Steve and Bucky finally relented. Steve gently placed Charlie in Clint’s arms and Clint began cooing at her. It was amazing and hilarious to watch them fight over who got to hold Charlie next.

She went and stood next to Darcy. She could sense that she was just as amazed as she was at the whole thing.

“Is this…is this for real?” Darcy asked her between giggles.

She looked at Darcy like she didn’t even know how to answer that. She saw that Darcy had her phone out was discretely recording the whole thing just like she did with Tony. She snickered softly, this was just too perfect.

“I don’t know D, but I think we should just sit back and enjoy it!” She replied.

Suddenly, Charlie made a noise either a giggle or a coo and they all started fawning over her even more. Both she and Darcy almost exploded into fits of laughter. She continued to enjoy the scene with Darcy for a bit longer and then she could sense that Charlie was becoming a bit over stimulated and needed a little break. She and Darcy approached Steve, Bucky and Clint and they all jumped a little bit.

Darcy immediately went to Bucky and started teasing him relentlessly. She couldn’t help but snicker some more. Normally, she would sympathize with Bucky but he sort of brought this onto himself.

“Having fun, guys?” She asked curiously.

She could sense the embarrassment just dripping from all of them it was so funny. Clint spoke first.

“Um, well, look it’s not our fault she is so cute!” Clint said trying to keep his voice from cracking.

“Anyway, tootsie roll, I think the mini tootsie roll needs a break.” Clint added, changing the subject quickly.

Again, she fought the urge to snicker once more at Clint’s quick change of subject but she decided to cut him some slack. Gently, she took Charlie from Clint and immediately she began to calm down a bit. She started rubbing Charlie’s little back and cooing to her. This calmed Charlie down even more but she knew that Charlie really needed some quiet time. After bidding Darcy, Bucky, Steve and Clint goodbye, she went to find a quieter place to sit the lounge.

She found a couple of empty chairs in the corner of the lounge and sat down in one of the chairs with Charlie. She gently started rocking her and cooing to her. Thankfully she somehow managed not to lose her pacifier in all that excitement.

“Shhh, my girl. Mama’s here.” She murmured.
She continued to rock Charlie back and fourth until she felt an extreme bolt of sadness coming from somewhere. She frowned, why on earth somebody was feeling so sad when this was supposed to be a happy occasion. She looked around and saw Natasha sitting a few seats over from her. She immediately understood what the problem was and she felt bad. She knew that stuff like this was not easy for Natasha to deal with. Having had her ability to have children taken away from her and watching somebody else be happy with their newborn child was extremely hard on her. She had to do SOMETHING to make her feel better.

Keeping a protective hold on Charlie she got up from the chair she was sitting in, she made her way over to where Natasha was sitting and sat down next to her. She smiled softly at Natasha and Natasha tried to smile back to her. She could sense that Natasha was beginning to feel even worse. She knew it was because Natasha was in the corner being miserable during something that was supposed to be a very special occasion and she felt bad about it.

“Hey Natasha, I know this is kind of a stupid question but are you okay?” She asked softly.

She watched Natasha make a face, she could tell that she was trying to figure what to tell her besides ‘No I am not okay I am miserable but I don’t want to ruin your special day’.

“I’m trying to be but it’s hard, I know this is a special day for you I’m sorry.” Natasha replied.

She gave Natasha a reassuring look.

“Oh Natasha you don’t have to apologize. I know this isn’t easy on you, you won’t offend me if you want to leave. I totally understand.” She said reassuringly.

Natasha laughed a little bit tonelessly.

“Only you would be okay with that. I swear you are far too nice for your own good. I promise you I will be fine.” Natasha told her, trying to sound confident.

She inwardly sighed. She knew that even though Natasha sounded confident it was all just a crappy façade and she really wasn't fine at all. She knew that there was more it than just loosing her ability to have children that was bothering her. It was being alone forever or not finding anybody to want and accept her because of all of that stuff. She knew that it was true no matter what Natasha tried to say about it. Natasha had sacrificed so much of what little happiness that she had left it was just so unfair.

After everything that she went through in her life, if anybody deserved to find some sort of happiness it was her. She still remembered the night that Natasha came to her completely distraught because she ended things with Clint. She had never seen her so distraught before or since that night. She sat with Natasha for hours while she cried her eyes out. It was awful but she understood why she did it. Clint wanted to settle down and start a family, something that was impossible for Natasha to give him so she decided that she had to let him go. She knew that Natasha wanted him to be happy even though she couldn't be the one to make him happy however hard it was on her. After that, something happened with Bruce that went no better possibly because he was as screwed up as she was in that department. Recently, Natasha had been talking to her about Steve but she refused to do a damn thing about it. She couldn't blame her for that after everything that's been through but maybe it was time that she convinced Natasha that it was okay to do something about it.

“Natasha, it’s okay to be not okay but it’s also okay to give things a chance too. I know it’s really hard but I don’t want to see you be miserable for the rest of your life and I don’t think you want to be miserable for the rest of your life either.” She said wisely.
Natasha gave her a look, she could sense that she knew exactly what or to who she was referring to and she could see that the tops of Natasha’s cheeks had gone the tiniest bit of red.

“Irena, you know I can’t do that! I can’t in good consciousness drag Steve into the mess that is my life!” Natasha hissed.

She inwardly sighed, she knew that response was coming.

“Look, I understand that but he has baggage too. I just want you to have a chance at being happy.” She coaxed gently.

She watched Natasha seek out Steve for a moment. He saw that she was looking at him and he gave her a goofy grin. She held back a snicker when she saw that the redness on the tops of her cheeks increase a little bit. She looked away quickly.

“Alright fine, you win. I will try to give Steve a chance but I can’t promise you that it’ll work out.” Natasha conceded.

She gave Natasha a warm and gentle smile.

“Good, all I ask of you is to give him a chance and let yourself be happy. Now, I think Charlie wants to meet her Auntie Natasha.” She giggled.

She gently placed Charlie who was sleeping like a log now into Natasha’s arms. She watched Natasha cuddle Charlie and stroke the top of her little velvet head. She could sense that she felt a whole lot less miserable now and that made her very happy. She and Natasha continued to talk for a bit longer until they were joined by Wanda who clearly wanted her turn to hold Charlie. She caught up with Natasha and Wanda for a bit longer and then she could sense that Charlie was getting hungry and it was time for her to be nursed. It would probably also be a good idea to check her little bum too. After bidding Natasha and Wanda goodbye, she left the area to go find a suitable place to go and feed Charlie in so she didn’t have to cover her up. She knew that there was a storage room somewhere in the lounge, she supposed it would have to do.

About halfway to the storage room, she came across Thor talking to Stephen. Stephen looked so uncomfortable. She could sense it just dripping from his pores. She decided that she had to see what the issue was. She got closer to Thor and Stephen and realized that Thor was telling Stephen about some kind of Asgardian potty training technique. She decided that it would be best to try and bail him out before the situation got any worse. She walked up to Stephen and nudged him gently. Stephen smiled down at her and Charlie tenderly.

“Hello beautiful, how are my girls doing?” He asked softly.

She smiled back up at him.

“Hey handsome, we’re fine but it’s time for Charlie to eat. I was wondering if you could come and help me out for a sec?” She giggled.

She turned to Thor and gave him an apologetic smile.

“Sorry to steal Stephen away from you Thor, but I really need his help.” She apologized.

Thor gave a booming laugh and waved her off.

“No need to apologize Lady Irena, when Stephen returns I will be happy to give him more Asgardian child rearing tips!” Thor boomed happily.
She tried to hold back a snort of laughter and Stephen was trying to hold back a shudder. After talking to Thor a bit more, she and Stephen managed to escape him unscathed. They found Tony’s storage room and entered. She was happy to see that all of Charlie’s stuff was in there waiting for her. She realized that Pepper must have left it in there for her, she would have to thank her later. Sometimes she wondered what she would do without Pepper. She turned to Stephen and saw that that he still looked a little freaked out and she couldn’t help but snicker a little bit. Oh Stephen.

“Stephen, are you okay?” She asked curiously.

Stephen shuddered once more.

“Ugh, I love Thor I really do but I will never be able to un-hear that!” He shuddered.

She couldn’t help the snort of laughter that finally escaped her.

“Oh poor baby!” She joked.

Stephen rolled his stormy blue eyes at her and went to go get Charlie’s stuff from her diaper bag so she could change her little bum. After she got that taken care of, she sat down on a chair and got herself comfortable so she could start nursing Charlie. As she did so, Stephen watched over her protectively. She enjoyed the quiet time with Stephen and Charlie until it was suddenly interrupted by a knock sounding at the door.

“Hey kid, are you decent in there? I need you to come out of there so I can talk to you.” Tony called through the door.

She and Stephen shared a look. She could feel Tony’s emotions through the door and they just felt odd. She could sense that something just wasn’t quite right.

“Hang on a sec Tony, I’m almost done here.” She called back.

After she finished nursing Charlie and made sure that she was decent, she made sure to keep a protective hold on Charlie and got up from the chair. Unsure of what to expect, she went to the door slowly and opened it. She was NOT expecting to see Sam standing with Tony on the other side. Sam was looking at her with a look in his dark eyes that begged her to give him a chance to explain things. Her mismatched eyes widened in shock. Before she could figure out what to do or say, she heard a deep growl coming from somewhere beside her. She turned to Stephen and just about began to panic. It was clear that he was already lost to the bond, his eyes were pitch black and he was staring murder at Sam. She knew that that was he was thinking about what Sam did the last time that they were here and the fact that he had to protect Charlie as well. It was making the effects of the bond twice as strong.

With lightening fast reflexes that she didn’t even realized that he possessed, Stephen lunged at Sam.

“No, Stephen don’t!” She yelled loudly.
A/N: Hey everybody! Here is a fresh new chapter already to go chalk full of good stuff! Okay first things first, I have to apologize for the ridiculous wait. I do have a reason for it. I have started my own original story from scratch and really wanted to get that going. For anybody that would like to check it out, it's on both here and Fictionpress under the pen name ryucrisis. It's called Misfits. It would totally make my day. My dream is to get something published one day so I hope this story is a start in that direction! Again, like always I have to thank everybody who left kudos and comments on my story it makes me so damn happy to get them every single time it happens!

Note 1: So this chapter has a bunch of stuff, forgiveness, sexy moments and more with Wong and Rosie and also a huge new plot point which I will not reveal so I won't wreck anything. I hope you all enjoy it!

Extremely Important Note 2: So, over the course of writing this story, I have come across one story that has A LOT of parts that are extremely similar to mine and I wish to address this. I want to make sure that everybody who is reading this story and or is currently just checking it out knows that I swear up and down that I DID NOT steal any ideas from anybody and all my ideas are in fact my own. I just wanted to make sure to clear this up because I am a little concerned that people will read both of the stories and either think WTF or just not want anything to do with either of them. That is the last thing I want. I wanted everybody to enjoy this story not think I'm stealing peoples stuff or something of the sort.

Okay, thank you for listening to my and now on with the show! Happy reading everybody!

Irena

Irena watched in horror as Stephen tried to lunge at Sam but Tony stepped in front of Sam and activated parts of his suit by pushing the little button the bracelet around his wrist. He only activated the parts around his hands and arms. It gave him enough extra strength that he could keep Stephen in place without hurting him. Tony gave Stephen same look he did the first time that Sam made him loose control of the bond.

"No Stephen, I can't let you hurt Sam, you and I both know what happened wasn't all his fault. I know you know that. You have to calm down and let the bond go. You don't want to do this in front of Irena and your daughter so let it go, please." Tony coaxed.

It wasn't working, Stephen was growling and thrashing in Tony's grip. She saw that Sam was not prepared to defend himself if Stephen some how broke free, she could sense just how sorry he was. She had to fix this somehow. Before she could even do anything however, Charlie started to cry uncontrollably and in a way she hadn't experienced yet. These weren't cries of 'I'm hungry' or 'I need my bum changed' these were cries of pure, unadulterated distress. Big fat tears began to stream down her tiny little face. Immediately, she tried to do everything she could to comfort her, but nothing seemed to be helping at all. She knew that it must be Stephen losing control of the bond that was
causing Charlie such terrible distress. Thankfully, she started sensing that Charlie's distress started overriding Stephen's need to protect them.

She could sense that Stephen's mind was clearing. He was quickly starting to return to normal and he stopped thrashing and growling in Tony's grip. Once Tony was sure that was Stephen was alright once more, he let go of him and retracted all the pieces of his suit. He immediately turned his attention to Charlie and completely ignored Tony and Sam for the moment. Gently, he took Charlie from her and started trying to comfort her. He cooed to her and rubbed her little back. She tried to reach up and grab his face with her chubby little hands. He reached down and kissed her little hands tenderly.

"Shh my little treasure, daddy is here now. Everything is alright." He cooed softly to her.

She watched Stephen comfort Charlie and her mismatched eyes softened. She couldn't help but enjoy such a sweet and tender moment. She continued to watch Stephen comfort Charlie for a moment longer and then turned her attention to Tony. Now that the situation was back under control, she knew that it would be a better idea for her and Stephen to have a talk with Sam privately. Of course, it took a moment to convince overprotective grandpa Tony that Charlie was okay to stay in the room while she and Stephen had the talk with Sam. She knew that Stephen would not 'Hulk out' again at Tony loved to put it any time soon. Charlie's needs far out-weighted the bond in his mind at the moment. She didn't think she could get Stephen to separate from Charlie for very long any time soon anyway.

After Tony left, she turned her attention onto Sam. She could feel his emotions and they still felt awful. She knew that he felt terrible about what happened at her baby shower and he desperately wanted to make things right. She could also sense that seeing the bond in action made him understand it a little bit more. She knew that were still parts of him that didn't like it and this was something she could understand. Trying to let go of those types of feelings was always a very hard thing to do.

She opened her mouth to speak but Sam beat her to the punch.

"Irena, you have no idea how sorry I am about all of this. I swear to you that it wasn't all me saying that stuff. I mean I was mad, but I would never do anything like that to you." He apologized profusely.

She gave Sam a gentle look and smiled softly.

"Oh Sam, I know that you weren't entirely you when you said those things. Don't worry I do forgive you and Stephen will eventually forgive you too." She reassured.

After she told Sam that, she heard a grunt of disapproval come from Stephen who was now currently sitting in a chair and bouncing Charlie on his knee. She gave him a look and rolled her eyes at him. Typical Stephen response. Turning her attention back to Sam, she saw that he was looking at her like she sprouted a couple of extra very ugly looking heads. She could sense that he was a little bit shocked that she was forgiving him so easily.

"Oh my god, why in the hell are you forgiving me for this so easily? Only you would forgive me for this so easily!" He exclaimed in shock.

She snickered a little bit at Sam's shock. She knew that he was right and any normal, sane person probably wouldn't forgive him so easily but she was not normal by any means. She also really wanted to try and repair her friendship with him as much as he did.
"Look Sam, I want to try and fix my friendship with you as much as you do. I know it's going to be hard but I would really like to try." She told him gently.

She could sense the relief just dripping from him, it was almost palpable.

"Thank you, Irena. You have no idea how much this means to me. I know it will take some time, I get that but I want to try too. This bond thing is still hard for me to deal with but I think I get it better now." He said honestly.

She gave Sam a look of understanding. The bond she and Stephen shared was difficult to try and understand at the best of times she knew it would take time. She could also sense that Sam was itching to try and win some of her trust back too. She decided that she would ask him if he wanted to hold Charlie. She knew that Stephen would hate the idea but she knew if she was going to try to regain any trust in Sam, trusting him with her most important treasure would be a good start.

"You're welcome. Say Sam, would you be comfortable with holding Charlie?" She asked curiously.

As she predicted, before Sam could even say yes or politely decline Stephen was out of the chair he was sitting in with Charlie and clutching her protectively to his chest. He was glaring hotly at Sam and She knew that the words 'absolutely not' were on the tip of his tongue. She inwardly sighed, she knew that this was going to happen. She approached Stephen and placed her hand gently onto his forearm. She hoped that feeling her emotions would make him feel more comfortable with idea of Sam holding Charlie for a bit. She could sense that it was working and she could feel him relenting a little bit.

He carefully and slowly approached Sam. She could sense that he was reluctantly thinking about handing Charlie to Sam. Sam looked so uncomfortable and she wondered why until he spoke.

"Okay, easy with the bond sh…crap! You two are making me nauseous!" He said, wrinkling his nose.

She couldn't help but snigger a little bit at the fact that Sam had tried to stop himself from swearing. She knew it was because of Charlie that he did. She could tell just how awkward and uncomfortable this all was for him but he was trying so hard. Stephen on the other hand, made a face at what he said. She could sense the protectiveness just oozing from his pores, he just about started to back away with Charlie but she gave him another look and he stopped. Finally, after some internal debate, he placed Charlie gently in Sam's arms.

At first Sam was frozen in place not really knowing exactly what to do, she could tell that he was a little nervous that he would 'mess up' some how. After a few minutes, he finally relaxed a little bit. Charlie was looking up at him with her big blue eyes. He held up his finger and she tried to wrap her chubby little fingers around it.

"Okay, so you're kind of really cute." He admitted, looking down at her.

Both she and Stephen continued to keep a watchful eye over Sam and everything was going smoothly until Charlie reached up and started trying to grab onto his mouth and nose. Her tiny hand managed to latch onto his nose hard. Sam let out a high-pitched pain filled squeal. She could tell he was un-sure on how he should go about prying Charlie's little fingers off his face and he began to panic a little bit.

"Oh my god, holy kung-fu grip! Irena, a little help here please!" He squealed in pain.

Even though she knew the situation was not exactly a laughing matter, she just couldn't help but
snicker a little bit at Sam's predicament as she tried to rescue him. It took a little bit to pry Charlie's tiny little fingers off his face because her little finger nails had dug in deep. She could sense that Stephen thought the whole thing was hilarious too even though it was mostly because poor Sam was in pain. She knew that Stephen would eventually come around and that's all she could ask for. Even though it wasn't totally his fault, what Sam did was very bad and she understood why Stephen felt the way he did.

She finally managed to free Sam and he gave her a grateful look. He gently handed Charlie back to her and gave her a small smile.

"Thank you for the second chance Irena and you too Stephen, seriously I don't deserve it." He said honestly.

He turned to Charlie and his smile got bigger.

"Also, remind me never to get on your bad side! Those little finger nails of yours are lethal!" He added, waggling a finger at her.

This caused Charlie let out a happy little squeak and she smiled warmly at him.

"You're welcome." She replied warmly.

When Stephen didn't say anything, she rolled her eyes and elbowed him in the side. He gave her the stink eye and then turn to Sam.

"You're welcome." He grunted.

After promising that he would try and drop by the Sanctum at some point, Sam decided that it was time for him to leave. She understood why this was, she knew that it would take baby steps for their relationship to be the way it once was. After saying goodbye, Sam left the room and Stephen once again took Charlie from her and cuddled her protectively to his chest. She snickered softly at him.

"Was it really that bad, Stephen?" She laughed.

He continued to give her the stink eye and rolled his eyes at her.

After everything had settled a little bit more, she and Stephen decided it was time to exit Tony's storage room. They exited the room together and of course Stephen still had Charlie clutched protectively to his chest. She highly doubted that anybody else would get a turn to hold her any time soon. She and Stephen mingled with her family a little bit long and she decided that it was time to get back to the Sanctum. The surprise encounter with Sam left her a little emotionally drain and she could really use some time to herself to process it all. After getting all of Charlie's stuff together, they bid everybody goodbye and returned to the Sanctum.

In the Sanctum, The Next Night

Stephen

Stephen was currently lounging in bed. He, his cloak and little Sapphire were all watching Irena pace the bedroom. He could sense the mess that her emotions were. This was the first night that Charlie was sleeping in her crib instead of the portable bassinet beside their bed. It was reeking havoc on Irena's stress levels, she had the baby monitor clutched in her left hand so tightly he thought that it might actually snap in half. He had to do SOMETHING to try and distract her. He knew that this was just a regular part of parenthood and that it had to happen at some point. He decided to try and voice this to her hoping that he wouldn't be killed where he stood for it.
"Irena, it's going to be alright. This had to happen at some point and we've put it off an extra night already." He reassured gently.

She gave him a look that he really didn't like.

"Well, I wonder why that was." She snarked.

Although he knew that response was coming, he still gave her the stink eye.

"Hey, after the rough day she had, she needed her daddy." He protested.

She gave him an incredulous look.

"Rough day?" She repeated.

He felt the tops of his cheeks get hot. He tried to elaborate without sounding too stupid.

"You know with Sam and all" He elaborated, trying to keep his voice from cracking a little.

Irena rolled her mismatched eyes at him.

"More like her daddy needed her!" She laughed.

He could feel the heat spreading from the tops of his cheeks down his neck. This was so embarrassing.

"Yes well..." He trailed off.

Not only was Irena snickering at him but so were his cloak and little Sapphire. Charlie was barely two months old and she already had him totally and completely whipped. Just like her mother. He needed to change the subject quickly before the situation he found himself in became any more embarrassing. Suddenly, he remembered the women at the park and he decided that now was as good a time as any to ask Irena about it.

"So, something interesting happened while I took Charlie to the park by the way. While I was sitting on a bench feeding Charlie, every time a lady passed me young or old they would give me strange looks. Their emotions even felt strange, would you have any idea why that was?" He asked, changing the subject abruptly.

Irena gave him a look, he knew that she could sense that he was trying to steer the focus of the conversation away from his embarrassment. Thankfully for him, she humored him. She giggled at his question and this completely confused him.

What in god's green earth was so funny about what he asked her?

"Stephen, I want you to go ahead and look up the definition of DILF on your phone." She giggled.

He did as she asked and picked up his phone off the bed side table. He clicked on google and typed DILF into the search bar. As he did this, he became completely unaware of Irena's shifting emotions or the fact that she was trying to subtly shoo both the Cloak and Sapphire out of the bedroom. After reading the definition of DILF, he looked up at Irena who had a look on her face that made a bolt of arousal shoot through his system. He knew that she could feel it though the bond, her mismatched eyes darkened considerably.

"So, I'm a DILF?" He asked already knowing the answer to that question.
She gave him a sultry look that set his insides on fire.

"Oh yes you are most definitely a DILF. MY DILF I might add." She purred possessively.

This was the first time that he heard her sound so possessive, he had to admit that he liked it a lot. If he wasn't already on fire before, he was now and he knew that he had to have her no matter what.

"I suppose that makes you MY sexy, delectable little MILF. Now come over here, I want to taste you." He growled lowly.

She wasted no time in coming to him, it had been so long since he got to have her in this way and he was intent on making sure that they both enjoyed every moment of it.

In the Library

Wong

For the past week or so Wong had been trying to do everything he could to forget about Rosie with little success. She had already some how weaseled her way into his heart and he didn't want to forget about her at all but she was human. If he did attempt to try and see her again how would he go about trying to explain the mystic arts to her? He sighed softly, maybe if he meditated it would give him the answer. Just as he prepared to try and meditate, he felt the magic of the Sanctum shift violently and he couldn't help but shudder a little bit. He knew that meant that Stephen and Irena were back at it and was very clear how long it's been since they last were. He sincerely hoped lightbulbs wouldn't start randomly exploding or something of that sort would start happening. He ran his hand through his short-cropped hair, why did this somehow seem to increase his want to see Rosie? He really needed to get his feelings under control before something really bad happened.

Again, he tried to prepare to meditate but as he tried once more a crash sounded from outside his hidey hole. His brows rose in confusion, just what in the hell was Maximus doing out there? He exited his hidey hole to see what was going on with Maximus and he was shocked to see him throwing a huge whopper of a tantrum. He knew that it had something to do with the fact that Stephen and Irena were otherwise indisposed at the moment. For some reason, whenever it happened it drove Maximus nuts. More so than even him. Clearly, something had happened to him to make him hate anything related to romance so much. Whatever it was that happened, it must have been really bad.

Books were flying in every direction and he had to duck twice to avoid being hit in the head by them. Shelves were rattling, and he just about had the table flipped over. He had never felt such frustration coming from Maximus before. It was a little bit frightening.

Oh his poor books, he had to put a stop to this madness before he or his books got hurt.

"MAXIMUS! Would you cut it out already! What is wrong with you?" He exclaimed in shock.

Maximus looked at him and he thought that he was as good as vaporized.

"Those two going at it like rabbits are diving me insane!" Maximus snarled angrily.

He gave Maximus a look, it had to be more than that. There is no way that two people enjoying some extracurricular activities could tick a man off so much unless there was more to it.

"Oh come on Maximus! You expect me to believe that there is nothing else bothering you but that?" He said incredulously.
For a split second, he thought that Maximus might actually tell him what was really bothering him but then he could sense that he changed his mind.

"You aren't thinking of going to see your pharmacy girl are you?" Maximus asked, changing the subject abruptly.

He couldn't help but give Maximus the stink eye, of course he would deflect the conversation away from himself using such a question.

"If I was, what's the big deal about it anyway?" He replied.

At what he replied, Maximus gave him a look that he didn't quite understand. It was as if part of him wanted him to go and see Rosie but the other part of him didn't. It was so confusing.

"Just how do you expect to explain the Mystic Arts to her and would she accept it?" Maximus pointed out.

He frowned at what Maximus just pointed out to him. He knew that Maximus was right and that aggravated it him even more. He found that he wanted it to work out, and he wanted to see what could happen between him and Rosie. Whatever happened to Maximus, there was no guarantee it would happen to him anyway.

"Listen Maximus, I don't know what in the HELL happened to you to make you so damn miserable but you don't know that whatever happened to you will happen to me so I am willing to take that chance. If you want to be miserable fine but go and be miserable by yourself. Leave me out of it!" He snapped angrily.

Maximus looked at him with zero emotion in his electric green eyes and was deadly silent. He realized that had struck a very big chord with him and what he said.

He tried to backtrack but it was too late to take it back.

"Look Maximus I..." He started but Maximus held up a translucent hand.

"Do whatever you wish but when it backfires don't come crying to me." He hissed.

Maximus wordlessly turned away from and floated into the nearest wall without so much as a second glance at him.

Now not only was he angry, he felt guilty about what he said to Maximus too and on top of all that the magic in the Sanctum was still shifting violently. He decided that he needed to leave the Sanctum for a bit if only to clear his head. He made the required arm movements to open a portal. The orange portal materialized in front of him and he stepped into it not really caring where he ended up. Sure enough, when he exited the portal he found himself in the alley way next to the pharmacy. Of course he did, even his own magic was telling him to go see Rosie. As he closed the portal, he began to sense that something was off. He could sense that Rosie was there but she was behind the Pharmacy instead of inside of it.

Something wasn't quite right and he was going to figure out what it was. Suddenly, he could hear Rosie yelling something.

"Stop it Jake, get off of me!" She yelled loudly.

Hearing that made the blood in his veins turn to solid ice. He could feel his magic crackling to life, whatever was happening he was going to put a stop to it. Rosie was HIS. He wasted no time in
stalking to where the voices were coming from. He went behind the Pharmacy and the sight he came across caused his eyes to darken with barely contained fury. Some big, stalky man was pushing Rosie up against the wall and looked ready to strike her. He could sense that she knew this man well but he really didn't care about that at the moment.

All he wanted was this man to get away from what was HIS.

"Get away from her!" He yelled.

His shout caused the stalky man to let go of Rosie and turn around to face him. The man who he knew to be Jake grinned at him and he wanted nothing more to wipe the stupid grin off of his stupid face. He could feel his eyes darkening and his magic getting stronger. It almost felt as if he was losing control of it and he never lost control. Not even when he was training at Kamar-Taj, he was far too disciplined for that. Something was changing in his magic, he wasn't exactly sure what it was but he had an idea.

"Well, look at what we have here. Does Rosie have a new boyfriend? If you want me to go, you'll have to make me!" Jake taunted.

He merely grinned darkly at what Jake told him. Even though Jake seemed calm on the outside, he could sense that he was just dripping with fear on the inside.

"As you wish!" He hissed angrily.

Red bands suddenly shot from his palms and wrapped around Jake. Without any hesitation, he yanked them tighter and Jake let out a pain filled yell. He could feel Jake's fear increase tenfold and he couldn't help but enjoy it far more than he should be.

"What in the HELL are you?" Jake exclaimed in fear.

He was now lost to whatever was happening to him. He well hell bent on protecting Rosie and getting rid of the threat to her. Nothing could stop him now.

"I'm your worst nightmare." He growled.

Suddenly, he felt a warm little hand on his one of his arms and his dark eyes widened. He could feel that Rosie was standing right next to him.

"Wong, please stop it. You're scaring me!" Rosie pleaded.

At her telling him those words, he could feel the haze immediately starting to lift and his magic began to return to normal. The last thing he wanted to do was scare her. He retracted the red bands and let go of Jake. Thankfully Jake took off quickly, he could only hope that he would stay away. He turned to Rosie and saw that she was crying. He could feel how scared she was of him and it made him feel just awful. He briefly wondered if this is what happened to Stephen every time he lost control of the bond he shared with Irena. Was that even what just happened to him or was it something else?

He gave Rosie an apologetic look. Before he could even try to utter an apology or try to explain to her what just happened to him, she turned around and ran into the pharmacy. He couldn't blame her for running away from him, nor did he have any clue how to fix it at all. He supposed Maximus WAS right. He was a sorcerer and Rosie was human. It wasn't going to work and now he had to go back to the library and listen to Maximus taunt him about the fact that he had been right all along.

He let out a soft sigh, it wasn't as if he had much of a choice anyway. He decided that he might as well get it over with. He quickly made the required hand movements to open a portal. The orange
portal materialized in front of him. He stepped into it re-appeared back into his library on the other side. He took a seat at the wooden table and placed his head in his hands. Just what in the hell was he going to do?

He sat like that for quite some time until he sensed that Maximus had floated into the room. He didn't bother looking up at him.

"You were right, a sorcerer and a human can't work together. It was stupid of me to go there today." He muttered.

He heard Maximus sigh and felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up at Maximus in shock at the sudden touch.

"No Wong, I was wrong. You don't want to be miserable like me for the rest of your life. You should go to her and talk to her." Maximus advised gently.

He looked at Maximus like he sprouted little tiny green hairs everywhere. Now he wanted him to go and see Rosie? Was he being serious? Was he missing something?

"Okay, let me get this straight. Before you were telling me not to see her and now you want me to see her. Are you bi-polar?" He asked seriously.

Maximus rolled his electric green eyes at the question.

"I supposed I deserved that. No, I promise you that I am not thank you very much and I need you to be serious for a change!" Maximus snarked.

He gave Maximus the stink eye at what he said. It wasn't his fault that he was being so damn confusing!

"So, why do you suddenly think it's okay for me to see her? I highly doubt she will want to see me now anyway. When I got there, she was being confronted by some guy who it was clear that she knew well. It was like my magic just took over my entire body and I had to protect her no matter what. I completely lost control of if and scared the guy off but I scared her too. She ran away from me, Maximus. It will be a miracle of I can get her to even look my way again." He explained dejectedly.

Maximus chuckled softly at his explanation and gave him a knowing look that kind scared the crap of out him.

"Wong, there are many different ways a bond could form between two individuals and they both don't have to be magical for it to happen. Sometimes it happens easily, other times it hits one person hard and is fast and scary, but it is never a bad thing. Your magic simply chose to bond with her at a very bad time and you were angry so it was…explosive. I'm sure if you tried to talk to her she would understand." Maximus reassured him.

He mulled over what Maximus told him in his mind. It was completely insane but he knew that he was right. He had to try and talk to Rosie and fix this mess.

"You sound completely insane, I hope you know that but you are right. I should go and try to talk to her and I will but I have to know before I go. How in the HELL do you know all of this and does have anything do with why you were freaking out earlier?" He asked curiously.

Maximus let out an exasperated sigh.
"Gee, thanks for the complement, Wong. You won't quit asking until you know the answer to that question will you?" He replied, already knowing the answer.

He shook his head, he had a feeling that Maximus was hiding something important and he wanted to know what it was.

"No, I know you are hiding something important and I want to know what it is." He said firmly.

He could tell Maximus was seriously still debating on whether he was going to actually tell him what it was and then he could sense that he was relenting.

"Alright fine, go and see your pharmacy girl. When you get back I will tell you what you want to hear." He relented.

He nodded and then gave Maximus a genuine smile. He could sense just how uncomfortable it made him and he thought it was funny.

"Sure that works for me and thank you Maximus, I mean it." He said sincerely.

Maximus merely waved him off and floated off somewhere. He couldn't help but roll his eyes.

'Alright, so he is back in pompous asshole mode. Because of course he is.' He thought to himself, shaking his head.

If Maximus was right and he had indeed somehow bonded with Rosie and the would be able to feel her from where he was. He closed his eyes and concentrated, sure he enough he could feel her. It was extremely faint but it was there. He continued to concentrate on feeling her and then he opened a portal. He seriously hoped that it would take him where he had to go. He entered the portal and sure enough when he exited on the other side of it he could sense Rosie a lot more strongly. It took him no time at all to figure out that he was in queens. It wasn't a bad looking neighbourhood. He followed his senses and walked down the street until he came to the last house at the end of the block.

He swallowed hard, he knew that Rosie was in that house. He forced himself to go up to the door before he completely lost his nerve and ran away like a giant coward. He rang the doorbell and waited.

Sure enough he began to her movement punctuated with a couple of curse words.

"I'll be right there!" She called out.

The door swung open and her green eyes became huge when she realized that it was him. He could sense her absolute shock at the fact that he managed to find out where she lived so easily. Glaring at him, she got over her shock quickly and immediately tried to slam the door in his face. He really couldn't blame her for any of it. He did the only thing he could think of and stuck his foot in the door before she could close it. He totally ignored the pain of his foot getting crushed, he could care less about it at the moment.

"Rosie, please wait! I know I screwed up royally but I really I want to try and make it right. I am so sorry I scared you." He apologized.

He gave her a soft and gentle look.

"I promise that all I want is to try to explain to you what happened. If you still want to never see me again after that I understand." He begged.
For a moment, he watched her internally debate with herself and then she sighed softly.

"Alright, you get one chance to explain yourself but that's it!" She relented.

He internally breathed a huge sigh of relief, he had no idea what he would have done with himself if she had sent him away. She opened the door a little wider and allowed him to enter the house. He entered the house and Rosie led him to a tiny kitchen table and chairs. As he was being led there, he looked around the small house. It was very quaint and well decorated. He also saw that there were children's toys strewn everywhere. It was very clear that she had a child. This really piqued his interest and he decided that he would ask her about it if he was given the chance to. It also explained how she automatically knew which formula to give him the first time he came to the pharmacy and met her.

When he and Rosie reached the little table and chairs, she sat down in one and he sat down in the other across from her. She looked at him expectantly and he tried to figure out how to start such a conversation without sounding totally insane.

"Okay this is going to sound totally insane to you and if you don't believe me I will totally understand but I practice honest to god real magic. The proper name for it is the Mystic Arts and really anybody can learn it but it takes a very special individual to understand the art and master it." He started.

He paused for a moment to gage her reaction. While he could sense that she seemed a little nervous about everything he was trying to explain to her, she seemed otherwise okay and he couldn't help but be a little bit shock.

"How are you not kicking me out already?" He asked incredulously.

Rosie merely rolled her green eyes at him.

"Wong, I witnessed you trying to rip my ex-boyfriend in half like three hours ago. I think we are a little passed that point already." She told him seriously.

He accepted her response to his question, she did have a valid point after all.

"Alright, point accepted. About that, I am sorry that even happened. I can assure you that I am not like that normally at all. When an individual awakens the magic inside of them when they first learn the Mystic Arts, it becomes very attached the individual's emotions. When I came to see you earlier, I was already aggravated about something else. I probably should have waited until I calmed down some before I came to see you. So, when I saw you being attacked by your ex-boyfriend that was it. I just totally lost control of my magic and it took over. I am so sorry it even happened in the first place and I scared you. I promise you that it is the last the thing I want to do because I care about you." He finished sincerely.

He could sense that she knew that his sincerity was genuine and her eyes softened.

"It's okay Wong, I forgive you. You did scare me but I do understand what you were trying to do. Honestly, I'm sorry the whole thing happened in the first place. Jake is the worst mistake I ever made. I was so young and stupid when I met him and I let him manipulate me. The only thing he was ever good for was one sperm. My daughter is my whole entire life and the best thing to ever happen to me. I have been desperately trying to start over with just me and her and make him give up his parental rights but you can see how well that is going." She explained softly to him.

He gave her a gentle look, he could feel her emotions and could feel his need to protect her grow at
what she explained to him. He was sorry that she had to go through all of it in the first place but he was determined to help any way he could.

"I'm sorry that you are going through such terrible things. You don't deserve it and I don't know how I can but I want to help you any way I can." He told her honestly.

She smiled genuinely at what he said. It was clear not many people in her life have told her such things before. He was determined to change that.

"Thank you, Wong. That really means a lot to me." She said genuinely.

He smiled back to her and he could sense that her emotions were shifting from being nervous to pure curiosity. He knew that she had mostly accepted the part of him that magical and was now very curious about it. He could sense all sorts of questions floating around in that pretty little head of hers. He would try answer all of them to the best of his abilities. He decided for that for now, it would be wise to strategically leave out the bond part. He didn't know what it was or how strong it was and the last thing he wanted to do was scare her again.

"I see you have questions for me." He laughed.

She looked a little embarrassed at being so obvious. He thought it was adorable.

"It is that obvious?" She blushed.

He pretended to think for a moment and then nodded.

"Pretty obvious, but that's okay. Ask away and I'll try to answer every one of them to the best of my abilities." He told her truthfully.

Ask away she did. She asked him about everything, from where he lived to if his 'sister' and best friend were magical like him. She also asked him how his magic worked and what kind of spells he could do. Again, he answered everything thing he could making sure to leave the parts about the bond out. Soon, he could sense that her little daughter who was sleeping in the other room was about to wake up soon and he knew he should leave before that happened but before he did he decided that wanted to know a little bit about her daughter.

"So it's my turn to ask you about something. You have a daughter?" He asked curiously.

She shook her head in exasperation.

"Really Wong? I think that pales in comparison to all of the stuff you just told me. Besides, I promise you that she isn't scary. She's three and her name is Olivia." She told him.

At hearing how young her daughter was, he panicked a bit internally. He and kids didn't usually mix well with the exception of Charlie of course but he was willing to try anything for her so he would try to get over that fear quickly. He inwardly sighed, he really didn't want to leave but he was really starting to push his luck. So this was what being whipped was all about.

"I take your word for it. Look, it's getting late and I'm sure your daughter will be up soon. I better get going." He said reluctantly.

He could sense a bit of reluctance coming from Rosie too, but he knew that she knew that he was right. They had to take whatever this was one step at a time.

"Alright, you're right. Before you go, I want to give you something." She told him.
She ran into her kitchen and started rifling through her kitchen drawers and pulled out a small piece of paper and a pen. She scribbled something down on the piece of paper and ran back to him with small piece of paper clutched in her had. She walked him back to her front door. She suddenly entered his personal space and he could feel a lot of emotion run through him as she did. She pressed the paper into his right palm and pressed a gentle kiss to his cheek. The touch was feather light and made him freeze a little bit. He wasn't expecting it at all.

"See you later, handsome." She murmured to him.

She backed away from him a bit and he felt as if he was barely able to string a coherent sentence together. He bid her goodbye, thankfully without his voice cracking at all and left her house feeling a thousand pounds lighter and happier than he had been in quite some time. He clutched the paper with her number written on it to himself protectively. He really hoped that this was the start of something good.

After he found a safe place to do so, he opened a portal and stepped into it. He stepped out of it and back into the library. Maximus was waiting for him sitting at the wooden table with a book open in front of him. He gave him a knowing look.

"So, I take it everything went well?" He asked knowingly.

He gave Maximus an exasperated look, he could sense that he knew full well how it went but he decided to humor him anyway.

"It went pretty well." He confirmed and then turned his attention to the book Maximus was looking at. "What's with the book?"

Maximus gestured for him to come closer and he complied.

"Come here and I'll show you." He replied mysteriously.

He looked at the book and realized that it was the same one that Irena freed him from all those months ago. Now his curiosity was really good and piqued.

"This is the Doctrine of the Guardians, it holds every bit of information on the Guardians in existence. From information on each Elder Guardian and spells of all kinds to the Guardian's way of life. It holds everything. I want to show you something." He explained.

Maximus flipped thought the book until he found what he was looking for and pushed the book in his direction. He blanched when he saw what was on the page. It was an illustrated picture of Maximus and he was standing with a woman. They looked so happy and in love. He knew with out a doubt that this was his bond-mate and she had to be a Guardian of some kind. It was the woman's appearance that caused all the color to drain from his face. She was a dead-ringer for Irena right down to the heterochromia. He had no idea how to even begin processing what he was looking at.

He looked at Maximus in shock.

"What in the hell is this Maxims? You have to tell Irena about this!" He exclaimed.

Maximus sighed, he could sense that his emotions were all over the place. It was something he had never felt from him before and if he was being honest with himself it just might be the most frightening thing that felt coming from Maximus so far.

"I know." He muttered softly.
Hey everybody, so it occurred to me that I was coming off as a bit of an asshole in the note that I left previous and that I might of accidentally scared people off. If I did, I am so sorry that wasn't my attention at all. I just wanted to try and get my point across about how important feedback is to me. It is literally the gas that keeps me writing and it just so happens that this story is particularly important to me and I have been noticing that I've been getting a lot of hits which is really awesome but not a lot of people are leaving me things and I can't lie it's frustrating as hell especially because I have no idea where I am going wrong. It takes like 30 seconds to hit the kudos button at least. I know commenting can be ass I get that, all I really want is for people to let me know that they are enjoying this story so please hit that button on the way out of here!

Okay, that aside I really do have to thank everybody who has left me something so far! You all have no idea how much it makes my day and I hope you all love this chapter!

I think that's all I have to say! Happy reading everybody!

~Ryu

Irena

Dream/Memory

5-year-old Irena sat in her bed and grumbled to herself. Her 'mother' told her that it was time for her to go to bed but how could she go to bed when she wasn't even tired? Why should she have to go to bed when she wasn't even tried? She should get to decide when it was time to go to bed. Well, she wasn't going to stay in bed, she was going to go the library and read a book instead.

Clutching 'Dark' closely to her small chest, she climbed out of bed and then went to her dresser and started digging through her sock drawer. She wanted some 'provisions' for her trip to the library. Whenever Mr. Mordo went away, he always brought her back candy of some kind. She had been stashing it away in her sock drawer for quite some time. Rifling through the contents of her stash, she pulled out a small packet of candy and then put back everything the way it was so nobody would find it.

With her little packet of candy in her hand and 'Dark' acting like her look out, she left her room and tip-toed to the library. She entered the library as quietly as she could and saw that it was thankfully completely empty. She wandered around and looked at all the books until she found one that she liked. She placed 'dark' onto the wooden table that sat next to the shelf of books that she was looking at so she could continue to keep a look out with her little packet of candy and then got the book down. It took a minute, but she managed to get it to the wooden table without making too much noise. Pulling up a chair, she climbed onto it and wasted no time in cracking open the book. She also picked up her little packet of candy and opened it.

For awhile, she flipped through the book and munched on her candy quietly. Suddenly, she began to hear a very familiar voice in the distance and immediately a jolt of fear ran through her system. She
DID NOT expect her 'Mother' to be in the library at this time at all. She knew that the smart thing to do would be to get back to bed as soon as possible so she wouldn't get caught and get into all kinds of trouble but part of her was kind of curious. She could here that her 'Mother' was definitely talking to somebody, but she couldn't sense that anybody was in the room with her at all. Something odd was going on and now her little girl curiosity was dying to know what it was.

As carefully as she could, she got off of the chair she had been occupying (she made sure not to forget 'Dark') and tip toed deeper into the library where her 'Mother' was. Making sure to be extra quiet, she hid behind a shelf and was shocked to see that her 'Mother' was talking to a book. Why in the world was her mother talking to a book? She continued to watch her 'Mother' and it was the like the book was talking back to her. She had no idea what to make of the entire situation. She listened to the 'conversation' for quite some time and it was if her 'Mother' was relaying information to somebody and then somebody else was relaying information back to her it was just weird.

Suddenly, her name came up in the conversation and her mismatched eyes widened in shock, was her 'Mother' talking about her? Why was she talking to a book about her? Her 'Mother's emotions were all weird too. It almost felt as if she was intruding on something that she wasn't meant to know about yet. She decided that it was time to get back to her room before her 'Mother' caught her and she got in trouble for being out of bed.

Clutching 'Dark' closely to herself, she scurried back to her room wondering what in the heck she just witnessed.

**End Dream/Memory.**

Irena startled awake and tried to catch her breath. She ran a hand through her sweaty, unruly hair. She held back a frustrated groan, she though that after she had the dream-memory of her 'Mother' wiping her memories of Kamar-Taj she would be done with them. Apparently not but at least this one had been mostly pleasant and kind of funny. She had no idea that she had been such a little trouble maker when she lived at Kamar-Taj. Snickering softly herself, she turned to tell Stephen about the dream memory only to realize that he wasn't there with her. It took her a moment but then she suddenly remembered where he was. He had woken her up a bit earlier in the morning because there had been an emergency at Kamar-Taj. One of the students had royally messed up a summoning spell and accidentally set some kind of mutant space creature loose in Kamar-Taj and because he was the Sorcerer Supreme now it was up to him to put it back where it came from.

She made a face and pouted a little bit. She hated waking up without Stephen there with her but understood that he had duties to attend to as Sorcerer Supreme. She sincerely hoped that he decided to take Wong with him to investigate this creature like she suggested. Just because he was the Sorcerer Supreme didn't mean that he was invincible like he thought he was. He was also stubborn as hell and probably didn't listen to her at all.

She let out a soft sigh, hopefully he came back to her in once piece.

Suddenly, Charlie started babbling baby noise through the baby monitor and she couldn't have asked for a better interruption from her crappy thoughts. Getting out of bed, she threw her hair up and went to Charlie's nursery to get her ready for the day. She entered Charlie's nursery and went to her crib. She saw that Charlie was awake and kicking air with her tiny little feet and had a handful of her pink blanket in one of her chubby little hands. She could sense that she was a little hungry but happy.

Smiling softly, she took Charlie out of her crib and cuddled her close.

"Hello, my happy girl. Let's get you ready for the day and fed." She cooed softly.
The first thing she did was remove her sleeper and then she changed her little bum. After she did that, she picked out a clean sleeper and maneuvered onto her little body. She disposed of the dirty diaper and then put the dirty sleeper in the laundry. Now that Charlie was all clean, it was time for her to eat. Gently, she picked Charlie up off of her change table and adjusted her so that she was resting comfortably on her shoulder. She went and sat down in her rocking chair and got comfortable. She adjusted herself and then adjusted Charlie so that she was in a comfortable position. As usual, it took a bit but Charlie latched on and started nursing. She let out a soft sigh, started stroking Charlie's little downy soft head. Nursing had to be one of her favorite mother-daughter bonding experiences. It relaxed her greatly and she could sense that Charlie was enjoying herself too.

For a moment, she sat rocking Charlie back and fourth and enjoyed the silence until niggling thoughts of Stephen started returning. She wrinkled her freckled nose. She was trying so hard not to be worried about him but she just couldn't help it. This was the first time he was away fighting something that could actually hurt him back and that scared her. She knew that she had to started thinking of something else otherwise she would be driven insane by her own thoughts and that was the last thing that she wanted.

Instead of thinking of Stephen, she concentrated on thinking about the weird dream-memory that she had. It was clear that her 'Mother' had been talking to Maximus while he was trapped in the book, there was no way it could be anybody else. She could only venture to guess that Maximus had been wanting to make sure she was looked after even while he was trapped in the book just from the information that her 'Mother' was relaying to him. Of course, at the time her five-year-old self didn't understand what the conversation had been all about. Now that she was adult, she understood what it was about perfectly. What she didn't understand at all was why Maximus seemed to do everything in his power to make it seem like he didn't want to help her half the time but back then he seemed perfectly fine with helping her. She wondered if had something to do with the fact that he had been trapped in that stupid book or did he just help her because he was forced to do it? For some reason, the thought of that made her upset.

Immediately, she tried to tamp down her feelings. She didn't want to upset Charlie while she was eating. She decided to would have to talk to Maximus today no matter what to figure out what was going on with him plus she needed to talk to him about what her next step would be with the door and key anyway. Before she did all of that, she wanted to have some tummy time with Charlie first. After she finished feeding Charlie, she wiped away her little milk mustache away with the receiving blanket she grabbed before she sat down in her rocking chair and then she made sure to re-adjust herself. The last thing she wanted was to accidently flash Maximus again or somebody else for that matter.

Getting up from her rocking chair, she held Charlie securely in one arm and picked up a soft blanket and couple of toys with the other hand. Satisfied that she had everything that she needed, she left Charlie's nursery and headed for the lounge. Not only was it quiet in there, it was also very spacious too. She would have plenty of room to enjoy tummy time with Charlie without any interruptions. So she hoped anyway. Entering the lounge, she placed the blanket onto the floor along with Charlie's toys. She rolled up the blanket so she could prop Charlie up onto it and she would be secure. She also gave Charlie one of her plush toys to hang onto.

It was amazing to watch her drop it and then try to reach out for it. For awhile she just sat and watched Charlie for quite some time until Sapphire came into the room. She could sense just how curious Sapphire was about why she had Charlie on her tummy. She could also sense that Sapphire want to 'help her'. Immediately, she wasted no time in bounding up to Charlie and 'checked out' the situation and then started try to give Charlie her toys. She would pick up one toy and try to give it to her and then the other, it was so hilarious to watch. She pulled out her phone and started discreetly taking a video to show Stephen later.
Soon, she could sense that Sapphire had decided that she needed more toys. Sapphire bounded out of the room and then came back with a toy in her mouth. She watched Sapphire gently place the toy in front of Charlie and then push it closer to her. She could sense how excited she was to be 'helping' Charlie. She sat while Charlie for a bit just watching over her protectively, when Charlie reached for a toy she moved it even closer and she managed to pick it up. She let out a happy little squeal and this made Sapphire even happier. Sapphire continued to bring her toys and she continued to record everything. This was something that Stephen just had to see when he got back.

As she continued to record Sapphire and Charlie, she suddenly sensed that she was no longer alone and turned her head in the direction of the door way. She was shocked to see Maximus standing in the door way looking at her with a look on his face that she had never seen before at all. There were no traces of his usual, pompous all-knowing attitude and his emotions even felt all weird. He was looking at her tenderly and with pride sort of like a father might watch a daughter. She had no idea how else to describe it.

Not having any idea what to do, she sort of just reminded frozen in place until she remembered what she was wearing and she could feel her cheeks heating up. She was wearing a dirty tank top (with a bra of course) and a pair of Stephen's pyjama pants, she never bothered to change thinking she would have time to do it later. She could sense that Maximus seemed to find her embarrassment at the whole situation endearing and this confused her even more. Just what in the hell was going on with him?

For awhile, he remained by the door just watching her with that look and she began to get a little unnerved by it. She gestured for him to come into the room.

"You know you don't have to stand by the door right? You can come in." She told him softly.

He hesitated for a moment and gave her a questioning look.

"I'm not interrupting anything am I?" He asked gently.

She shook her head and smiled at him. He came further into the room and watched Charlie for a bit.

"So this is the technique called tummy time that've heard about before?" He asked curiously.

She nodded and he floated closer to Charlie. Charlie was looking at him with huge blue eyes and was trying to reach out to him. He gave her a tender look.

"Hmm, it's remarkable how big she's gotten already. Her neck strength and hand-eye coordination have improved in a remarkably short time, it's amazing." He murmured softly.

She had to idea what to say at his assessment, his behavior was so confusing. Suddenly, she noticed something floating by his head. What the hell?

"Um, Maximus? Why is there a book floating by your head?" She asked curiously.

Sighing softly, Maximus turned his attention from Charlie to her and the book currently floating next to his head.

"There is a sensitive matter that I must discuss with you as soon as possible. This book will help me do that." He explained.

She gave him a look. Why did she feel like this was going to royally suck for her? She sighed softly, she supposed it was better to get it over with now then to be stuck wondering about it for the whole day.
"I suppose now is as good a time as any." She shrugged.

He nodded and levitated the book over to the coffee table. Getting up off of the floor, she bent down and gently picked up Charlie off of the floor. As she did this, Sapphire came up to her and crawled up her shoulder. Going over to the couch, she sat down with Charlie snugly in her lap and Sapphire went to make herself comfortable on the arm of the couch. Maximus floated up to the couch and hovered over the cushions next to her in sort of a sitting position. Considering that Maximus was a spirit, she knew that this was close as he could get to actually 'sitting' on the couch with her.

He waved his hand over the book and it magically opened on its own. She looked at the page the Maximus opened the book to and her eyes became huge with shock. She was staring at an illustrated picture of Maximus with a lady and they looked so happy together. She knew that this lady must be Cesrine. The look that Maximus was giving the lady in the illustration was one of pure love. She knew that it could be nobody else. What was unnerving her was how similar she and Cesrine were in appearance. She looked exactly like her to the point where they could be twins. She knew that Maximus had explained to her that she was her descendent but there had to be something more to it. She looked at Maximus with huge eyes.

"Maximus, what in the hell IS this?" She asked in shock.

Maximus gave her a look, it was one that she knew well. Stephen gave it to her whenever he had to figure out how to tell her something that was more than likely going to upset her. She could tell he was trying to figure out the best way to explain it to her.

"Irena, do you remember when I told you about Cesrine and explained to you that you were her descendent?" At her nod he continued. "Well, it's more than that. You are actually her great, great, great, great, granddaughter."

For a moment, she just sat there in shock and tried so hard to process what Maximus just told her. It changed so many things. It meant that she wasn't human at all and that she wasn't just the 'Descendant of the Guardians' but so much more than that. She had the blood of two Elder Guardians running through her veins. It also meant the Maximus was her family too. Suddenly, another thought popped into her mind. If Maximus was her family, why in the HELL did he act like such pompous ass to her all the time. He treated her more like a burden then a great, great, great, great, granddaughter. The idea of another biological family member not wanting her sent a jolt of pain through her system.

She tried so hard to keep her emotions level for Charlie's sake. She looked at Maximus with un-shed tears in her mismatched eyes.

"Maximus, if you are truly my family like you tell me you are why do you treat me like I am nothing but a burden that you are stuck dealing with half of the time? Do you not want me?" She asked softly.

At her question, she could feel the gut-wrenching guilt just dripping from Maximus. He was looking at her with such regret in his electric green eyes.

"Because I was so afraid to get close to you. I feel as though I failed Cesrine and I couldn't live with myself if I failed you too and not just you now but Charlie too. I have no idea how to have a happy medium of being close enough for you to trust me, but no so close that I can fuck it up." He admitted.

Her mismatched eyes widened at Maximus using 'fuck' it was the first time such a word came out of his mouth and it shocked her. She could sense just how hard it had been for him to admit all of that to
"Oh Maximus, you don't have to feel so guilty. I understand why you felt the need to do what you did but you won't fail Charlie and me I promise. Cesrine wouldn't want you to live with such guilt hanging over your head, I know it's hard but it's okay to let some of that go." She reassured.

At what she just told him, Maximus looked at her incredulously for a moment and then his looked morphed into understanding. She knew that he knew her well enough by now that this was something that she would easily accept. He gave her a gentle look.

"Oh Irena, thank you for being you. I see so much of Cesrine in you and I know that she would be so proud of you." He told her sincerely.

She smiled softly at Maximus and he smiled back warmly at her. It was the first time she ever saw such a smile on his features and she decided that it suited him. She hoped that this side of him would come out more often.

Deep down, whether Maximus acted like a pompous asshole or not, he was her family and she knew that he would help her to shoulder the enormous burden that she had been tasked with no matter what.

After the emotional moment had passed, she and Maximus talked about nonsense things and it was quite pleasant. He even entertained Charlie a little bit, it was adorable to watch. Soon, she could sense that it was time for Charlie to have a nap and she decided that she could use one too. She was little emotionally exhausted from what just happened between her and Maximus. After bidding Maximus goodbye, she left the lounge holding Charlie protectively in her arms and Sapphire riding on her shoulder. She decided to leave Charlie's blanket and toys behind in case she wanted to do more tummy time with her a little bit later.

Entering Charlie's nursery, she got Charlie ready for her nap. It took her quite a bit longer than it normally would to get her settled probably from feeling all the heavy emotions that were being shared between her and Maximus. She had honestly been surprised that Charlie hadn't fussed more than she did because of it. After she finally managed to get Charlie settled and asleep, she left Charlie's nursery with Sapphire still riding on her shoulder and went to her and Stephen's bedroom. She wasted no time in collapsing onto the bed. Sapphire went onto Stephen's pillow and made herself comfortable. She let out a soft sigh, she hadn't been expecting to have such a tough conversation with Maximus but she was glad she did. She understood him so much better now. She was so happy to know that part of her biological family did love her very much.

As she continued to contemplate what this new bit of information meant for her, she could feel her eyes begin to get heavy and she drifted off to sleep.

Several Hours Later

Irena

Suddenly, Irena was startled awake by a shout of pain and a lot of noise. She could sense that Stephen was finally back but he was hurt and in a lot of pain. The bond was screaming at her to go to him. She immediately tried to jump out of bed as fast as she could and got tangled up in the sheets as she did so. After she managed to get herself un-tangled from the sheets, she quickly left the bedroom and ran to the foyer. She couldn't believe the sight that greeted her.

It was clear that Stephen and Wong had just stumbled through a portal. She sucked in a breath at just how awful Stephen looked. He had cuts and scrapes everywhere and she could sense just how
magically drained he was. She saw that Wong was desperately trying to keep him from collapsing completely onto the ground. She wasted no time in running to them. She tried to help Wong keep him up right. She looked up at Stephen, she just couldn't keep the worry from leaking onto her features. Stephen tried to give her a reassuring look, but it ended up looking more like he was wincing in pain.

"Stephen, what in the HELL happened to you?" She asked, worry dripping from every word.

Stephen opened up his mouth to try and explain what happened but Wong ended up beating him to the punch.

"What happened is DINGUS over here decided it would be a great plan to take on a mutant space crab all by himself." Wong explained.

At Wong's explanation, she gave Stephen a look that was somewhere between total shock and total exasperation. Stephen turned to Wong and glared at him and then turned his attention right back to her.

"Sweetheart, I promise you that I'm perfectly alright and that it looks worse than it is." He reassured her.

She gave him a look, she had so many things that say to him about what he just told her but she decided it would be better to get him somewhere more comfortable and get his injuries looked after first. She could sense that Wong agreed with her. Together she and Wong managed to get Stephen up the stairs and to the bedroom without causing him too much more pain. She and Wong sat him onto the bed and Wong went to get some medical supplies. While Wong did that, she began to assess his injuries, of course both Sapphire and the Cloak helped. She could sense just worried they were about him.

She did this wordlessly until he gently stopped her and forced her to look at him.

"Sweetheart, are you alright?" He asked gently.

At Stephen asking her that she could feel the tears welling up in her eyes. She was so torn between being upset and angry.

"Shouldn't I be asking you that? What in the HELL were you thinking going to there to take care of that creature without Wong? You could have been seriously hurt!" She hissed.

She was trying so hard not to be angry at Stephen but she just couldn't help it. This was exactly like her going into the dark dimension all alone. She didn't want you to do this alone if you don't have to." She told him, trying to swallow the lump in her throat.

He gave her a tender look and she could feel the tears start streaming down her face. He opened his
arms to her and she wasted no time in burying her face into the crook of his neck not caring at all that he was all bloody. He wrapped his arms around her and began comforting her any way that he could.

"Shhh, my little love." He cooed to her.

She stayed all wrapped up in him for some time before he spoke again.

"I promise you that I will take Wong with me next time. Does that make you feel better?" He murmured softly.

She let out a soft sigh and nodded into the crook of his neck.

"Yes, it does. Thank you so much." She murmured back to him.

"You're welcome." He mumbled, placing a tender kiss onto her temple.

She stayed in Stephen's arms a while longer while she continued to calm down. After she felt calm enough, she reluctantly separated from him and continued to assess his injuries. As gently as she could, she removed his tunic to get a better look at his chest where the majority of his injuries seemed to be. When she saw just how bad it was, she sucked in a huge breath. There were several deep gashes on his chest. Oh, Stephen. As she was assessing just how bad they were, Wong came back into the room with a bunch of medical supplies. She gave him a grateful look.

Just as they were about to start trying to patch Stephen up, Charlie's cries sounded through the baby monitor on the night table next to her. She made a face, the bond was desperately driving her to stay with Stephen but she knew that she should go get Charlie first. It was very likely that she just wanted to be in the same room as them. She turned to Wong and an idea popped into her head.

"Um Wong, would you be comfortable with going to get Charlie while I start cleaning Stephen up?" She asked hopefully.

"She more than likely just wants to be in the same room as us." She added.

For a moment Wong hesitated and then he nodded.

"Sure, I can do that." He told her awkwardly.

She couldn't help but giggle at Wong's awkwardness a little bit. It was adorable and hilarious at the same time.

"You'll be fine Wong, I promise she doesn't bite…yet!" She joked.

Wong merely rolled his dark eyes at her in exasperation and left the room. She was so wrapped up in looking after Stephen that she didn't even notice the cloak or Sapphire follow him out of the room.

**Sapphire**

Sapphire bounded out of the room after the cloak, she could sense it was up to 'no good'. She knew that the cloak just wanted to protect little mistress but sometimes it was just way too much. She knew that friend of Master was okay. She bounded into the room of her little mistress and her big yellow eyes widened at what she was looking at. The cloak was not letting friend of Master anywhere near
little mistress this was not good at all. She wasted no time in climbing up the crib so she could try and make the cloak see that friend of Master was no threat to little mistress at all. She tried to reason with the cloak, but it refused to listen to her. Little mistress was so upset and she was crying loudly and she tried to comfort her, but nothing was working, she knew that she needed to go get help.

Climbing out of the crib, she bounded out of the room of little mistress and back into the room of her Master and Mistress. She climbed up onto the bed and saw that Master and Mistress were trying to rest. She could smell that Master was hurt. She didn't want to wake them up but she needed help. She tried Master first and jumped onto his head. She started climbing all over his face and yanking on his hair as hard as she could. Master wasn't moving fast enough because he was too hurt. She tried Mistress instead. She jumped onto Mistress's head and started yanking on her hair too.

Thankfully, Mistress seemed to understand that something was wrong and quickly got up to follow her. She brought Mistress to the room of little Mistress and Mistress finally somehow made the cloak stop.

She watched her Mistress with little mistress and let out a happy little growl, she felt such relief and pride that she managed to recuse her little mistress from the stupid bully cloak.

_Irena_

Needless to say when Sapphire burst into the bedroom and started trying to rip Stephen's hair out she had been shocked. She knew that it really wasn't a laughing matter because Stephen was hurt and in pain but she couldn't help giggle a little Stephen's predicament a little bit. It was just so funny or it was until Sapphire jumped on her head and started yanking on her hair hard enough to rip it out too. It took no time at all to realize that something was very wrong and that Sapphire needed her help with something. She quickly got out of bed and followed Sapphire to Charlie's nursery. She was shocked at scene that she walked into, it was no wonder Sapphire was freaking out.

The cloak was hovering over Charlie's crib and wouldn't let Wong anywhere near it. She could sense Charlie's fear and knew that she had to get the cloak to stop now. She understood that the cloak was just trying to protect Charlie but this was total overkill. It took a few minutes but she managed to convince the cloak Wong was no threat to Charlie. The cloak pouted at her and the levitated away. She couldn't help but roll her mismatched eyes at it. She turned to Wong who looked a little bit traumatized but happy that she got him out of that mess. Wong reassured her that he was okay and then went to go prepare more medicine for Stephen now that she had everything under control.

Gently, she took Charlie out of her crib and cuddled her close. She knew exactly what she could do to make Stephen feel much better but first she bent down to show Sapphire that Charlie was okay. She gave Sapphire a scratch on the head and told her what a good girl she was. Sapphire made a happy little noise and climbed up her shoulder. She wasted no time in leaving Charlie's nursery with Charlie protectively in her arms and Sapphire sitting on her shoulder. She entered the bedroom and her eyes softened when she saw that Stephen was resting. She could sense that he wasn't quite awake but not totally asleep either. She tip toed up to Stephen and gently placed Charlie on his bare chest. His reaction was immediate, he cuddled her protectively to himself and let out a soft sigh. She could sense how much better he felt. Charlie let out a little yawn and started drifting back to sleep.

Her eyes softened at the sweet scene in front of her. Watching Stephen with Charlie was always one of her most favorite things to do. She climbed into bed with them and they enjoyed some quiet family time.

As she finally began to relax and started trying to process the crazy day she had, she couldn't help but think about how much she loved her family. Even though it was all kinds of weird and crazy, it was filled with love and she would never EVER change a thing.
To Be Bitten By The Love Bug

Chapter Summary

A/N: Hey! I’m back with a huge fricking chapter for you all. Sorry for the hold up, it wasn’t on purpose! This chapter just happened to come out huge and took forever to finish writing. So I have to explain a little something here. For this chapter I sort of figured I should flesh out Rosie’s character a little bit since she will be super important down the road and I figure you all would love to see her and Wong interact a lot more and solidify their relationship BUT I made sure that everybody was in it of course. It is mostly Wong/Rosie with a touch of Stephen, Irena and Maximus. There is also the introduction of a couple of Rosie’s friends who become important a little later on as well!

Okay, I think that’s all for now! I hope you all enjoy this chapter!

NOTE: In my haste to get this thing up, I totally forgot to thank everybody for the comments and kudos. You guys are the driving force that keeps me going. I am so happy to see so many people enjoying this story!

Happy reading everybody!

Irena

Irena whistled a tune to herself as she walked into the kitchen. She opened the fridge and took a look at what she had to work with. She quickly decided on chicken stir fry with rice for dinner because it was quick and easy to make. Between looking after Stephen while he recovered from his ordeal and attending to Charlie’s needs, she was glad to finally have a bit of time to herself and cooking was something that really soothed her soul.

After pulling all of the required ingredients out of the fridge, she pulled out a couple of pots and pans so she could start putting everything together. She pulled out a cutting board and started chopping up the chicken. As she did this, Wong suddenly appeared in the kitchen with a look on his face that she had not seen before until now. She could sense the apprehension just dripping from him. She looked at him with her brow quirked.

"Um, Wong, you look a little nervous. Is everything okay?" She asked curiously.

Wong shifted on his feet, it was clear that he was trying to figure out how to ask her something but didn’t quite know how to do it.

"Well, here’s the thing. I want you to teach me how to cook.” He blurted.

Her eye brows disappeared into her hairline. Why in god’s green earth did Wong suddenly want her to teach him how to cook? There had to be a reason, she gave Wong a look that just screamed ‘would you care to elaborate?’.

He looked so uncomfortable. For a moment, he hesitated and then he spoke so quickly she almost...
didn't catch it all.

"Okay fine, you see I sort of met a girl and want to learn how to cook for her." He elaborated.

For a moment, she stared at Wong in shock and then her mouth fell open. When in the HELL did Wong manage to meet a girl? She just had to know everything!

"Oh my god! You met a girl? When did this happen? How did you meet her and when can I meet her?" She squealed excitedly.

Immediately, Wong started trying to tone down her excitement and she looked at him with huge eyes. Oh no, did she do the wrong thing by getting too excited? Why did Wong not want her to get excited over hearing such amazing news?

She could sense that Wong realized that he was giving her some pretty mixed up signals. He started trying to explain himself quickly.

"Oh f…no, I'm so sorry little sister. I want you to get excited, but I don't want Stephen to know just yet." He tried to explain.

She gave him a look, she was still sort of confused as to why he would want to hide something so exciting from Stephen. At her look, Wong tried to elaborate a little bit more.

"Look, I don't want Stephen to know just yet because I know that he won't let me hear the end of it as soon as he does and I am still trying to figure everything out myself." He tried to explain.

Her eyebrows rose at his explanation. She had no idea that men got as excited about that kind of thing as much as women did. Of course, Stephen would only want to help Wong but she knew that it would probably end up being complete overkill and that would only serve to stress Wong out even more than he already was. She decided that the best solution was to try and help Wong as much as she could. She knew that Stephen would eventually find out one way or another. Hopefully, by the time he does find out, Wong would be a lot less stressed about the whole thing.

"Alright, I understand. I'll try to help you the best I can. I don't know how long I can keep Stephen from finding out but hopefully you'll be a lot less stressed out by everything by then." She told him reassuringly.

Wong smiled at her, she could sense just how genuinely grateful he was for her help.

"Thank you so much, little sister!" Wong said gratefully.

She smiled back at him and set him up with a cutting board so she could teach him how to cut vegetables. After she got Wong comfortable with cutting vegetables, she went back to preparing her chicken. She finished cutting it up and got it in the frying pan. Now that the chicken was cooking, she started gathering ingredients for her stir fry sauce. As soon, as Wong finished up with the vegetables. She would teach him how to put it together.

She was so busy teaching Wong that she failed to sense that Maximus was near until he popped out right in front of her. She let out a shocked squeal and nearly jumped right out of her skin. It was a good thing that she had no knife in her hand at the moment.

"Maximus, what the hell is wrong with you!" She exclaimed in shock.

Maximus let out a barking laugh at her shock.
"Nothing is wrong with me. I simply overheard that you were giving Wong a cooking lesson and my curiosity was piqued so I came to check it out. It's not MY fault you never pay attention to your surroundings." Maximus snarked playfully.

She rolled her mismatched eyes at Maximus and fought against the urge to flip him off. She could hear Wong snickering in the background and she glared heavily at him. This caused him stop snickering quickly. She turned her attention back to Maximus.

"Okay, you've seen that I am in fact giving Wong a cooking lesson and nothing more. Now, shoo!" She snarked right back.

Maximus grinned at her cheekily and shook his head.

"Oh no, you aren't getting off that easy! I know you must be giving Wong a cooking lesson for a specific reason. I wonder what sort of reason that could be?" Maximus asked cheekily.

Immediately, she bit her lip and fought to keep a straight face. Clearly, Maximus already had an idea of what was going on. She decided that Wong was on his own for this one.

"I don't know, I guess you'll have to ask Wong why I am giving him a cooking lesson." She replied with a shrug.

Wong gave her a look that screamed 'I am flipping you off internally' and she shot him one right back that said 'That is what you get for laughing at my misery, you jerk!'. Maximus looked between the both of them for a moment and then turned his attention to Wong with one of his silver brows quirked.

Wong gave both her and Maximus the stink eye but relented.

"Alright fine! I asked Irena to give me a cooking lesson because I want to cook for Rosie. Are you happy Now?" He groused.

Maximus grinned triumphantly and Wong looked like he would throw something at him if he could.

"There was that so hard? Now tell me, why didn't you come to me for advice? I would have been all too happy to help you, I'm more than just good looks you know" He preened.

She and Wong looked at Maximus incredulously. Since when did Maximus know anything about dating? She just had to ask him.

"Maximus, since when do you know anything dating?" She asked incredulously.

Maximus outright laughed at her question and at how incredulous she and Wong were.

"Oh come now, I had to woo Cesrine somehow did I not? I was quite the romantic back in my day!" He laughed.

Now she was just plain curious, she needed to know what kind of techniques Maximus used to woo Cesrine. She could sense that Wong was very curious too.

"Okay Romeo, just what kind of techniques do you suggest?" She asked curiously.

Maximus smiled and began listing off a bunch of suggestions. Most of them were...kind of lame but they were cute. He suggested, taking her out to a movie and using the 'faking a yawn to put an arm around the girl's shoulders' trick, he also suggested a nice walk in the park and of course a home
cooked meal. All of the normal, slightly lame and over done but cute things. He even suggested finding out what her favorite chocolates were.

She pictured Maximus trying to woo Cesrine with all of these things and she couldn't help the sweet smile that formed on her face. Cesrine was a very lucky lady to have found such a sweet dork like Maximus.

She decided that it couldn't hurt to let Maximus stay and help a bit. By the time they were done the meal, however, she was sorely regretting her decision. He tried to take over everything she did and nothing was ever 'done right' or rather to his specifications. It was starting to drive her insane.

She turned to Maximus with her hands on her hips and an exasperated look on her face.

"Okay Maximus, if you don't back off now, I will seriously figure out a way to trap you back in the book you came out of. I am supposed to be cooking this meal, not you!" She hissed in total exasperation.

Maximus held up his translucent hands in surrender but she could sense that he was amused at her exasperation with him.

"Alright, alright, I'll leave!" Before he left he turned to Wong. "If you want a REAL cooking lesson you know where to come."

Maximus disappeared into the wall opposite of her before she could say or do anything about his parting comment.

She let out an aggravated growl and threw the spoon that she was currently holding in her left hand at the wall that he disappeared into. Feeling especially childish about the whole situation, she flipped the wall off with both hands for good measure. Wong was laughing at her display but she could care less.

Now that she felt better and Maximus was gone, she and Wong finished the cooking lesson in peace. After the lesson was over, she told Wong that if he ever wanted any more cooking lessons all he had to do was ask her. He was all too happy to accept the offer. They both knew that Maximus meant well but Wong would more than likely be driven insane before the first lesson was over. He needed a patient teacher not a perfectionist. Hopefully, they could figure out a way to continue having lessons without Maximus finding out. She knew that it was a pipe dream to think that he wouldn't eventually find out but they could try.

After bidding Wong goodbye for the day, she got a plate of food and a glass of milk ready to take to Stephen. He had been sleeping on and off with Charlie all day and it was time that he ate something. She picked up the plate of food and glass of milk off of the counter and left the kitchen.

The whole way back to the bedroom, she couldn't help but think of Maximus and how much more at ease he seemed to be. Of course he was still as snarky as ever but she could sense that he somehow felt lighter and much happier than he had ever been since she had met him. She knew that it must have something do with the conversation they had the other day. It was the first time he had mentioned Cesrine freely in a positive way. It seemed that he was finally letting the past go and she couldn't be more happier or prouder of him. She knew that Cesrine would be very proud of him too.

Her thoughts drifted to Wong and this mystery girl of his. She still couldn't believe he met a girl. Unfortunately, because Maximus had interrupted their cooking lesson she was unable to ask all of the questions she wanted to. She was desperate to know how he met this girl and who she was. Hopefully, at their next cooking lesson she would be able to find out more Wong's girl without
being harassed by Maximus.

As she got to the bedroom door, she tried put all thoughts of Wong and this mystery girl out of her head. She still wasn't exactly great at hiding her thoughts from Stephen but she had to try for Wong's sake. All of this was so new to him and she knew first hand just how overwhelming it could be. She opened the bedroom door and entered the bedroom. She saw that Stephen was sitting up in bed with Charlie tucked into his tunic. Her mismatched eyes softened, this was by far one of favorite things to watch Stephen do with Charlie. She could sense just how much they both enjoyed it.

Immediately, Stephen sensed her presence and looked up at her with his brow quirked. He had a look in his stormy blue eyes that indicated he already knew that something was off. She started screaming internally. Crap, why did she suck at hiding her thoughts so much?

"You are hiding something from me, my little love." He said knowingly.

She bit her lip. She desperately tried to think of a way to 'tell' Stephen what she was 'hiding' from him without giving everything away.

"Stephen, I'm not really hiding anything from you. Wong just came to me for a cooking lesson and Maximus came and interrupted us that's all I was thinking about." She explained.

She made sure leave out the part about WHY Wong wanted the cooking lesson. Stephen was still looking at her with a look that just screamed 'I know you are leaving something out, do you think I'm stupid?'

"So tell me, why exactly did Wong suddenly want a cooking lesson?" He asked curiously.

She racked her mind for something to say that might get him to back off a little bit and thought of the perfect thing.

"Oh I don't know, I guess he thought it would be a great idea to learn to cook so you two could eat something other than take out when I'm gone." She snarked playfully.

Stephen gave her a look. She could sense that he still didn't quite buy what she was telling him but thankfully he left it alone for now. Wong owed her bigtime for this.

Stephen watched as Irena placed his dinner on the night table. Regardless of what she said, he knew that she was leaving SOMETHING out and he wanted to know what it was. He knew Wong well enough that there was no way he would just ask for cooking lessons unless there was a specific reason he wanted them. Something was going on with Wong and he was going to find out what it was one way or another.

He knew that he would have to be careful how he went about it because he knew Irena would not be happy with him at all if he tried to sneak out while he was still recovering. He let Irena take Charlie from him so he could eat. While he ate, Irena decided that she would go and give Charlie a bath and he thanked every god above. It would give him the chance he needed to sneak out and if by chance he did somehow end up getting caught, he would just tell her that he was going to go and retrieve more pain cream which was mostly true anyway.

Once he was sure Irena was long gone, he placed his empty plate onto the night table next to him and got out of bed wincing a little bit as he did so. The cuts on his chest were taking their sweet time healing. As he exited the bedroom, he let out a long sigh and ran a hand through his hair. When he went to take care of the space crab, he honestly thought that he would be able to handle it himself
with no problem. He completely underestimated how strong it was. How the student managed to even summon it in the first place, he did not know. That had been the first time he found himself in a situation that he could not handle on his own. It made him feel...well old and he hated it so much.

He would never admit it out loud, but Irena had been right all along. He should have taken Wong with him in the first place. For the time being, he tried to push those thoughts from his mind and entered the library. He was shocked to see that Wong was totally engrossed in a piece of paper. If his curiosity wasn't already piqued before it sure as hell was now.

He approached Wong and tried to look at the paper over his shoulder.

"So Wong, what's with the piece of paper?" He asked curiously.

Wong was so engrossed with the piece of paper that he completely failed to sense him standing next to him. He just about jumped a foot in the air at the sound of his voice.

"Stephen! What are you doing here?" Wong exclaimed, trying to keep his voice level.

Wong tried to subtly hide the paper behind his back and he couldn't help but quirk a brow at this.

"I came here for more pain cream and to ask you a question. However, I am more interested about that piece paper, Wong. What is it?" He asked again.

Wong made a face at the question and hesitated. His behavior was so out of character it was almost frightening. In all of the time he knew Wong, he hadn't seen him behave in such a way before and not once had he tried to hide anything from him before.

Finally, after a bit more hesitating, Wong started trying to explain to him what the piece of paper was all about.

"Um well, there is a phone number on the piece of paper. I don't quite know how it happened but when I was getting formula for Charlie I met a girl. She was the worker who helped me pick out the formula. I got to know her a little bit and she gave me her number." He explained.

He looked at Wong in shock. How in the hell had he managed to do all of that without him finding out about it? His shock quickly morphed into total excitement and happiness. If anybody deserved to be happy it was Wong. He did so much for him and deserved to find somebody and be happy just as he found Irena.

He let out a jovial laugh and slapped Wong on the back causing him to let out a shocked noise.

"Wong, this is wonderful! I knew you had it in you! You have to bring her to the Sanctum so Irena and I can meet her!" He said happily.

Immediately, Wong held up his hands and tried to backtrack.

"WAIT, hold ON! I'm still trying to figure everything out! I haven't even gone on a date with her yet. I have no idea what I'm even doing." Wong admitted.

Stephen calmed down some and gave Wong a look of understanding. That explained so many things, it explained what Irena was trying to hide from him and why she gave him the cooking lesson in the first place. Once upon a time, he knew his way around the ladies. Maybe he could help Wong along a little bit.

"Well, that explains why Irena gave you the cooking lesson earlier. I was quite the ladies man once,
maybe I can help you out a bit?" He suggested.

Wong's reaction to his suggestion was not what he was expecting. He could sense that Wong was becoming angry and he had no idea why. Had he pushed is boundaries asking about the note in the first place?

"UGH! So, that's why you really came here! To ask about the stupid cooking lesson! What else did she blab to you?" Wong asked angrily.

Immediately, he felt the need to protect Irena from Wong's anger. He knew that it was mostly the bond talking but he also didn't want Wong to be angry at her for something that wasn't even her fault in the first place. He placed a calming hand on Wong's shoulder and he could sense that it helped some.

"Wong, relax. She didn't tell me anything. I promise you. I managed to figure it out all on my own she had nothing to do with it." He explained gently.

At his explanation, Wong defused immediately. He could sense that he sort of felt like a bit of a jackass now.

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get so mad at Irena, it's not her fault and I know that she is only trying to help me. This whole situation is stressing me out and I want to do it right. She is so worth it and I don't want to mess everything up." Wong apologized.

He gave Wong a reassuring look and a pat on the shoulder.

"It's okay, you won't mess up everything up. I will help you to make sure that doesn't happen. I may not look like it now, but I as I said earlier I was once quite the ladies man." He reassured.

Wong started snickering at him. He looked at him in confusion. He didn't think any part of what he said was amusing at all.

"Stephen, only you can manage to sound reassuring and egoistical at the same time in the same sentence!" Wong laughed, shaking his head.

He couldn't help but give Wong the stink eye at such a comment.

"Wong, do you want my help or not? I can go back the way I came and leave you on your own." He groused.

At the idea of not getting his help, Wong held his hands up in surrender.

"Alright, alright you win! I'll be good!" He surrendered.

He rolled his eyes, surrendering or not he could still sense the amusement just rolling off of Wong in waves. He chose to ignore it for now.

"So, getting the point at hand, what kind of ideas did you have for a first date?" He asked curiously.

Again Wong made a face. It just screamed 'all of my ideas are completely embarrassing'. He quirked a brow at him, they couldn't be THAT embarrassing. He waited patently until Wong finally worked up the nerve to list off a few things such as a movie or cooking dinner for her, the normal stuff. All good but a little over used and slightly outdated. He knew that Wong could do much better than that. Suddenly, a great idea popped into his head and he knew exactly what Wong could do.
"Hmm, how about surprising her with flowers at her work? She would enjoy that right?" He suggested.

Wong contemplated the suggestion and then smiled. He could tell it was something that he hadn't thought of yet.

"I think that's a great suggestion. Thank you Stephen!" He said gratefully.

He smiled back and couldn't help but preen a little bit. He still had it.

"You are very welcome. Please let me know how it goes and I don't wait too long to bring this lady of yours to the sanctum. Irena and I want to meet this woman who has managed to make my no nonsense best friend so smitten." He laughed.

Wong let out a mock-annoyed growl and gave him a playful shove in the shoulder being careful to mind his injuries of course. He picked up a pot of pain salve and tossed it to him.

"Yeah, yeah. Now take your pain cream and get out of here before Irena catches you." He said in mock annoyance.

He continued to laugh but did as he was told. It was completely amazing how this mystery woman seemed to change Wong for the better so quickly. He was so much more calmer and happier now. Even though Wong would never ever admit it out loud, he could sense how lonely he had been and how much he wanted to find somebody the way he found Irena.

He smiled internally. He couldn't wait to meet this woman, he knew without a doubt that she would be accepted into his wonderful patchwork family immediately.

Wong

Wong let out a contented sigh, as soon as Stephen left the library he began contemplating just how he would go to the pharmacy and surprise Rosie. He couldn't BELIEVE that Stephen came up with such a good idea. What's worse he had to tell him what a good idea it was and inflate his ego even more. He chuckled internally. Regardless of that fact, he owed him big time for so many reasons.

Before he met Stephen, he thought for sure he would end up alone for the rest of his life and that was something he feared. So much so that it almost caused him to have anxiety over it and then Stephen fell into his life like the pain in the giant ass he was. With Stephen, eventually came Irena and now he was part of a family and he couldn't be happier.

He shook himself from his thoughts and decided that he would just try to find his inner Stephen and just do it. He got up from his work bench and opened a portal. He stepped out near the pharmacy and looked around. One of the times he went the pharmacy, he had spotted a floral shop. Sure enough, there was one a couple of buildings down from the pharmacy. He wasted no time in going there. He purchased a bouquet of beautiful daisies and then went straight to the pharmacy. He was shocked he we realized that he couldn't find her anywhere and this confused him greatly. Where else could she be?

Immediately, he went up to the tills and thankfully an older lady was standing there pricing merchandise. He cleared his throat gently and she looked up at him. She smiled at him kindly.

"Hello dear, is there something I can help you with?" She asked kindly.

He hesitated for a moment and then found his voice.

"Um yes, I was wondering if Rosie was working tonight?" He inquired softly.
The older lady gave him a knowing look and her smile got bigger.

"No dear, she is working at her other job tonight." She explained to him and then she picked up a pen and a pad of paper. "Here, I will write the address down for you."

She handed him a piece of paper and gave him a motherly pat on the shoulder.

"Here you go, dear. I know you will take great care of my Rosie. She deserves somebody like you in her life as much as you deserve her." She said knowingly.

Before he could respond to what she said, the older lady was already back behind the counter and still had the knowing look on her face. He decided that he would ask Rosie about her when he had the chance. As for right now, all he wanted to do was figure out what this other job was all about. He exited the Pharmacy and read the address on the paper. He concentrated really hard and then opened a portal.

It was extremely hard for him to open portals to unfamiliar places. He prayed to every god above that it worked properly. He entered the portal, he popped out from the other side of it and was completely shocked to see where he ended up.

He was in front of 'Knockers', a seedy bar. Why in the HELL did the portal take him to 'KNOCKERS'?!

Inside of 'Knockers'

Izzy

Izzy sighed as she stood at her locker with the door wide open. She was trying to braid her electric green hair to keep the majority of it out of her face. She really hated this stupid job, if she had a choice she would have left it so long ago but she couldn't. She also worked at a great vegetarian restaurant but the hours sucked and so did the tips. There was no way that could live the lifestyle she was forced to live on crappy tips and no hours. Plus, she couldn't in good consciousness leave Rosie to suffer in this hell hole. She and Rosie were partners in crime, it was them against the world and they always had each other's backs no matter what the situation was.

Lately, she had been noticing a weird in change in Rosie's behavior. If it were anybody else, she would say that Rosie was infatuated with somebody but that was damn near impossible. After all of the crap that happened with Jake, she would be shocked if Rosie would ever let anybody get close to her in that way ever again. Knowing exactly what it felt like to go through that, she wouldn't blame her at all.

Suddenly, Rosie waltzed into the break room clearly in her own little world. She watched the whole display with her eyebrows raised. Rosie went to her locker without even acknowledging her at all.

Okay, something was clearly going on with her and she was going to find out just what in the hell it was one way or the other.

"Dude, snap out of it!" She shouted loudly.

At her sudden shout, Rosie jumped about six feet in the air and let out a shocked squeak.

"Izzy! What in the HELL was that for?" Rosie groused.

She rolled her eyes and started laughing. This caused Rosie to give her the stink eye.

"You were walking around in la-la land I had to do something!" She laughed.
Immediately, she could see that Rosie's neck and cheeks were heating up. She could tell that she was totally embarrassed at being caught. That solidified her thought that there must be a guy of some kind. She couldn't even believe it.

"Oh I was not!" Rosie protested.

She inwardly snickered, of course Rosie would try to deny it.

"The hell you weren't! Who is the lucky guy? For you to be that all over the place, there has to be a guy." She prodded.

At her mentioning of a guy, Rosie froze right up and she wasn't entirely shocked. Talking about her love-life in general was never an easy thing for Rosie to do.

"Oh my god Izzy, what guy? There is no guy!" Rosie denied.

She made a face, of course Rosie would deny it. She knew that she would have to coax it out of her gently.

"Come on Rosie, what do you take me for? You are acting totally twiterpatted and I should know what that's all about. Tell me who they guy is." She coaxed gently.

For a moment, she hesitated and then she started spilling everything in true Rosie fashion.

"I honestly don't even know what it is, during one of my shifts at the pharmacy I helped out this clueless guy pick out baby formula for his niece and it just snowballed from there. He is like no guy I have met before, I don't know what it is. I feel like I just know he won't hurt me and that I can trust that he won't. We've barely just met and I know this. Don't ask me how but I do. He is so sweet and completely the opposite of Jake and I have no idea what I'm doing at all!" Rosie blurted out all at once.

She looked at Rosie in shock and then enveloped her in a hug which she returned and hung on for dear life. Oh, her poor Rosie girl.

"Just breath, girl. Everything is fine and you are okay. It okay that you met a guy, hell, it's okay that you feel you can already trust him. Nobody can dictate how fast the relationship should go but you and it's a very good thing that he is the opposite of Jake. Believe me when I say that opposite is what you want. If you want a prime example of that, just look at Dax and I. He and I are completely and totally opposite in every way. Sometimes opposite is just what you need." She reassured.

She let Rosie calm down for a minute longer and then she pulled back and looked her over.

"Are you going to be okay? Is everything to be okay?" She asked seriously.

She could tell that Rosie was contemplating what she said and that it really helped. She smiled softly at her.

"Yeah Izzy, I'm okay. I guess you're right. Seeing this guy is not a bad thing, it's okay that I feel so close to him already and it's good thing that he is the opposite of Jake. He is sweet and he cares about me. I even told him about Olivia and that didn't scare him away. I can't let what Jake did to me ruin this, I promise I will give him a chance!" Rosie promised.

She smiled back at her. She was so glad that she managed to talk Rosie out of giving up on whatever what was happening between her and this guy. She and Olivia deserved a happy life and if this guy could give her that she was all for it. She knew exactly what it was like to find the right guy. She did
so in Dax. Dax was everything that the guy in her previous relationship wasn't. He was her sweet, loving dork and she couldn't ask for anything better. She desperately wanted the same for Rosie.

After making sure that Rosie was fine, they left the break room and went out into the hell that was 'Knockers'.

15 minutes later

Izzy

Izzy groaned, it was barely 20 minutes into her and Rosie's shift and she already wanted to commit murder. This entire place was bullshit and she wanted nothing more than to burn it to the ground. She turned away from a customer that just tipped her poorly and something caught her eye. Or rather a somebody.

There was a man standing near the entrance of the bar and he looked totally out of sorts like he had never been to a bar before in his life. He looked almost terrified. He was also holding a bouquet of daisies in his right hand. Now her curiosity was good and piqued. She had to see just what this dude was all about.

She put a coy smile on and walked up to him.

"Well, hello there. Is there anything I can help you with?" She asked coyly.

At her question, he seemed to freeze even worse. Sometimes her hair color or her nose and tongue piercings tended to throw some people off but this seemed beyond that. This poor guy legitimately had no idea what in the hell do with himself in here. She decided that she needed to try a different approach.

"Okay, are you looking for somebody? Is there anybody I can help you find?" She tried again, dropping the coyness completely.

This seemed to help a lot and it took him a minute to get his thoughts organized but he finally spoke.

"Um, yes. Is…is Rosie around here somewhere?" He stuttered.

Her pale blue eyes widened as everything suddenly fell into place. This must be Rosie's new beau and clearly Rosie hadn't told him about this place. That's why he was so confused. She really couldn't blame her; this place was a hell hole and she wouldn't have wanted to tell him either. She got a good look at him, he really was the complete opposite of Jake. He kind of reminded her of a giant confused puppy. It was really adorable.

"Of course, just wait here and I'll go get her for you!" She said kindly.

Immediately, he seemed to relax and seemed a lot less freaked out. He smiled at her.

"Thank you so much!" He told her gratefully.

She smiled back at him and then whirled around. She quickly picked out Rosie standing next to the bar talking with Dax. She and Rosie tended do that when they had a customer that was particularly pushy. They would go and talk to Dax while he dealt with the customer or got one of the bouncers to deal with the customer. Just because Dax had a slight build, wore glasses and kept his hair styled just so, did not mean that he was a pushover at all. He could take anything that was thrown at him and was not afraid of anything. Rosie must have had a crappy customer and Dax got the bouncer to get rid of him.
She walked up to the bar and tapped Rosie on the shoulder. Rosie turned to face her and gave her a questioning look.

"What's up?" She asked curiously.

She gently shifted Rosie in the direction of 'puppy man' and her green eyes nearly bulged right of her skull.

"OH holy shit! What is he doing here? I wasn't ready to tell him about this place yet!" She squealed in shock.

She barely held back a laugh, Rosie almost never swore that was usually her department so it was hilarious to hear her just blurt out the word 'shit'.

"Dude, relax! Just go and talk to him and I'll cover for you, don't worry!" She reassured.

Rosie gave her a grateful look and gave her a quick hug.

"Oh my god, I owe you so much!" She exclaimed happily.

She waved Rosie off and ran to quickly retrieve Dax's jacket from behind the bar so she had something to cover up with.

"No you don't" She threw Dax's jacket to Rosie and she caught it effortlessly. "Here, put that on so you don't freeze or scar your beau even more!"

Rosie mouthed a quick 'thanks again' before taking off to go and talk to her beau. She turned to Dax who had been watching the entire scene with his eyebrows raised. She snickered at the expression on his face.

What a completely insane turn of events this was, had she not witnessed the whole entire thing she would have never believe it.

Hopefully, this was finally the start of something good for Rosie.

Rosie

Rosie was just about start hyperventilating. She had no idea how she was going to explain this to Wong. She was eventually going to tell him about this stupid place but she had been trying to put it off until she had to. She never expected him to find out about it on his own. She would have to ask him how he did. For now though, all she wanted to do was get him out of here so she could try and explain the situation to him. Deep down, she knew that this wouldn't change anything between them because Wong just wasn't like that but after what Jake put her through she was a little gun shy and she didn't want to scare him away.

She approached him quickly and touched his arm. He looked so happy to see her and she immediately felt herself relax. She knew that Wong didn't see her any differently.

"Come on." She murmured softly.

She gently led Wong out of the bar and he turned to face her with concern written all over his features.

"Rosie, why in the HELL didn't you tell me you work here too?" He exclaimed in shock.

She winced a little bit, she knew that question was coming from a mile away.
"Wong, I have a daughter to support. One job just doesn't cut it. I don't want to work here but I have little choice in the matter." She explained.

Wong gave her a gentle and reassuring look.

"I understand that but why didn't you tell me about this place before?" He asked gently.

She looked away from him in embarrassment.

"I was embarrassed about it. I didn't think you would want me anymore if you knew about it." She admitted.

Immediately, Wong entered her personal space and gently forced her to look at him. His sudden boldness shocked her but it was no means unwelcome.

"Listen to me Rosie, I will never not want you and I will help you. I will make this better for you, I promise." He reassured fiercely.

She looked at him with huge green eyes. She couldn't remember the last time somebody told her anything like that. She couldn't help but hug him. He stiffened in shock momentarily and the relaxed completely against her.

"Wong, thank you so much. You have no idea what that means to me." She murmured into his chest.

Wong let out a breath and his arms tightened around her.

"You are welcome." He murmured back to her.

She happily stayed wrapped up in him for a few minutes until she noticed something in his right hand. She pulled back slightly and saw that it was a lovely bouquet of daisies. She smiled at the sight of them.

"Are these for me?" She asked curiously.

Wong blushed and handed the daisies to her.

"Um yeah, I want to surprise you with them." He explained.

She went on her tippy toes and placed a kiss on his cheek. He blushed deeper.

"Thank you so much for these, they're beautiful!" She said happily.

He looked suddenly a little bashful, he shifted on his feet.

"You're welcome." He replied quickly.

It sounded as if his voice had went up an octave and she couldn't help but giggle at how bashful he was being.

Suddenly, a great idea popped into her head. She sifted through her shorts pocket for her house keys. She tossed them to Wong and he caught them. He looked at her with complete and total confusion.

"What are these for?" He asked in confusion.

She couldn't help but smile a little mischievously.
"Those are my house keys. Will you go back to my house and wait for me? That way you can put the flowers in some water and I can thank you properly for them." She explained cheekily.

If Wong wasn't blushing before, we as red as a tomato now. It was so adorable.

"Um, okay sure, I can do that!" He just about squeaked.

Her mischievous little smile grew larger.

"Great, thankfully I only work four hours shifts at this awful place. I shouldn't be too long." She told him.

She placed another gentle kiss on Wong's cheek. She could tell just how much he liked it. She reluctantly parted from him and went back into the bar.

She was so happy that it felt like she was just about flying on air. She couldn't believe that Wong accepted this so easily. If this is what love was truly like, she was never going to give it up.

She had a taste of true happiness and now she was hooked.

Wong

As he opened a portal to Rosie's house, Wong tried to process all of what just happened. While he hated that Rosie worked at such a crappy bar, understood it. She had to look after her daughter somehow and he knew that she was absolutely right about the pharmacy just not cutting it. There was no way she could provide anywhere close to a proper life for her and her daughter just working there alone but he didn't want her working such a crappy job. He had to do something about it.

He popped out of the portal and entered Rosie's house. The first thing he did was locate a vase for the flowers and then he filled it with water and gently placed the flowers inside of it. After he did that, he went to sit on the couch to wait for Rosie. He sat until he started fidgeting from being bored. Unable to sit any longer, he got up and started pacing.

Soon that began to drive him nuts too, he had to think of something else to do while he waited for Rosie to get back.

An idea popped into his head but he didn't know whether he had the guts to actually do it or not. He was getting curious about what the rest of Rosie's house looked like besides the living room and wanted to go take a look.

For a moment, he debated to himself whether to do it or not and then he finally gave in.

He exited the living room and went up a set of stairs near the front door. The first room he came across was a bathroom and he just ignored it. He went down the hallway a little bit and came across a bedroom. He took a peek inside and quickly established that the bedroom must belong to Olivia it was filled with everything that a princess could possibly want. Clearly, Olivia was somewhere being babysat while Rosie was working. He snickered at just how adorable the princess room was. He moved onto the next bedroom and took a look inside. Immediately, he felt his heart break open. The bedroom was completely empty. This bedroom must belong to Rosie.

It made sense that she would spend all her money trying to give Olivia the best life she possibly could.

He felt awful, he had to fix this somehow. She and Olivia shouldn't have to live this way.
Suddenly, he began to sense that Rosie was close by and knew that she would be home very soon. He went back down stars and sat on the couch to wait for her.

Not long later, the door swung open and in stepped Rosie looking severely annoyed. She kicked her shoes off and dropped her bag by the door.

"Ugh! I am so glad to be out of that place! Some days I would rather not eat if it meant never going back to there again!" She groused.

When he didn't respond to her, she quickly made her way over to him and sat down next to him.

"Is everything okay, Wong? Why are you so quiet?" She asked worriedly.

He hesitated, he had no idea how to explain to her that he had been snooping around and how she would take it. He felt like an asshole. He decided that he would just have to tell her.

"Um, I kind of snooped around, I'm really sorry. If you hate me, I totally understand." He told her, waiting for the worst to happen.

For a moment, she looked furious with him and he internally panicked.

"Wong, what the hell? How dare you snoop around my house?!" She yelled, giving him an angry glare.

His eyes became huge and he immediately tried to stutter out an apology. Rosie held her glare a moment longer as he did so and then burst out laughing. He looked at her in shock.

"I'm sorry Wong, I just had to mess with you! I promise it's fine, I sort of figured you'd might." She told him reassuringly.

He let out a breath that he hadn't realized that he had been holding. He gave her a playful glare.

"Rosie! That wasn't very nice!" He admonished playfully.

She let out a playful giggle.

"Oh come on, I was just having a little fun." She giggled and then turned serious for a moment.

"Look, I know things aren't really that great but I am doing the best I can and I would rather give Olivia the life that she deserves more than anything else."

He gave her a look of understanding and took her hand in his.

"I know, I promise it will be better from now on. You aren't alone anymore." He promised her softly.

She gave him a gentle look and squeezed his hand.

"I believe you. Now, I think it's time I thank you for those beautiful flowers." She said in a sultry voice.

The sound of her voice sent a shiver down his spine and his eyes darkened. He wasn't stupid he knew what she meant by that. Before he could even process what was happening, she was straddling him. He sucked in a huge breath, it wasn't that he didn't want it. He wanted it more than anything but he had no idea what he was doing.

"Rosie, I..." He started but she shushed him.
She seemed to understand what he was trying to tell her.

"Shh, it's okay. I promise I won't push anything. I just want to explore for a bit." She murmured reassuringly into his ear, she gave it a little nip as she pulled back.

He couldn't help the needy noise that came out of him. Where that that even come from? The noise just seemed to fuel Rosie's fire. She pressed a gentle kiss onto his lips and then did so again and again. Soon, he could feel the tip of her tongue gently prodding the seem of his lips and he parted them with a heavy groan. She quick to take advantage of his parted lips and he let her do so without question.

He had never felt for somebody so strongly for somebody before in his life, at this moment he would gladly give her the world if he could.

It felt as if this feeling would bring him to his knees at any moment, if this is what love truly was he never ever wanted it to end.

*Spoiler*

**Wong**

Wong was panicking. He accidently ended up staying the whole night at Rosie's and just left her house. He was now trying to figure out a way to get back to the Sanctum without Stephen or Maximus knowing.

*He was in so much trouble and he knew it.*
Irena

Irena tip toed out of Charlie's nursery as quietly as she could, she had just gotten her down for nap and the last thing she wanted to do was wake her up. For some reason or another, she had been stubborn about going down and if she somehow accidentally woke her up she would probably end up crying herself. Just as she managed to get into the hallway and home free, a hesitant knock sounded at the front door of the sanctum and her mismatched eyes widened in shock.

Normally, when anybody came to visit (her family especially) they just tended to let themselves in. She couldn't even remember the last time that somebody actually took the time to not only knock on the front door but wait to be let in. She could sense that whoever was at the door was unfamiliar but not an enemy. Her curiosity was good and piqued now.

As quickly as she could, she left the hallway and descended the stairs. She entered the foyer and ran up to the front door. She opened the door and was shocked to see a young woman standing there looking at her very hesitantly. She looked to be around the same age as she was. She had long, wavy blond hair and bright green eyes. She could just sense the un sureness just rolling off of this woman in waves. For a moment, she stood there wondering just what in the hell this young woman could possibly want until she spoke.
"Um, is Wong here?" The young woman asked hesitantly.

Immediately, she started putting the pieces together in her mind and realized that this young woman must be Wong's new girlfriend. Excitement started coursing through her veins and she cracked a huge smile. She understood why Wong liked this young woman so much. She just exuded nothing but goodness and kindness. She just had to find out more about her.

"I'm sorry Wong isn't here right now but you are more than welcome to come in and wait for him if you like." She offered.

At her offer, the young woman smiled and she could sense that most of her hesitancy had melted away.

"If it isn't too much trouble, I would love to do that. My name is Rosie by the way. You must be Wong's sister right? He has told me a lot about you!" Rosie told her enthusiastically.

Her smile grew bigger at how enthusiastic Rosie was. She could sense that they would become very good friends very quickly.

"Yes I'm Wong's sister, Irena! Unfortunately, Wong has been a little on the stingy side about telling us about you! I am so happy to meet you! Please, come on in!" She said just as enthusiastically.

Irena ushered Rosie into the into the Sanctum and led her to the lounge. She was so excited to get to know Rosie and she could sense that Rosie was just as excited to get to know her. Since Wong had been so stingy with the details of his budding relationship, she was just dying to ask Rosie how she ended up meeting Wong in the first place. She wasted no time in voicing said question to her.

"So Rosie, I just have to know. How in the world did you end up meeting Wong in the first place?" She asked curiously.

At her question, she could sense Rosie's emotions shifting in a good way. She knew that this was definitely a very happy memory for her.

"You know, that is actually a really funny story. He ended up coming into the pharmacy I work at looking for baby formula for you. He looked so out of place and like a lost puppy that I had to help him. When he came in a few days later for more formula, I just jumped at the chance to help him again. He was just so nervous and adorable, I just couldn't pass up the chance to get to know him more." Rosie explained.

Her mismatched eyes softened at Rosie's explanation. She could sense just how happy Rosie was and it made her just as happy. She could sense just how much she adored Wong already, it reminded her of when she first met Stephen. It was so nice to feel.

"Rosie, that is so great. Wong is honestly the best big brother I could ever ask for. He deserves somebody like you as much as you deserve him." She said honestly.

Rosie beamed at what she told her and she honestly meant every word. She loved her other brothers dearly but with Wong it seemed different somehow. She didn't know what it was exactly, it might have something to do with the fact that they shared a magical familial bond that she didn't have with her other brothers or it maybe it had something to do with the fact that Wong helped her through what was possibly the most terrifying time in her life thus far when she was in labor with Charlie and freaking out. He somehow managed keep her mostly calm until Stephen arrived. It was something she would never, ever forget. If anybody deserved to be happy it was him. She could sense Rosie's happiness increase even more (if it was even possible) at her approval.
"Irena, you have no idea what it means to me to hear you to tell me that. All I want to do is make Wong as happy as he makes me and I am so thrilled I got your approval to do that. I have never met anybody like Wong in my life ever. He the most amazing person I have ever met. There is just something about him that just draws me to him and I can't get enough of being around him." Rosie gushed.

She listened to Rosie talk about Wong and her curiosity became extremely piqued. She was talking like somebody who had magical senses. It was almost like she was describing a bond or something like it but it was clear that she had no idea that she was talking about anything close to that. Usually, both people had to be magic users for any kind of bond to start forming. As far as she knew, Rosie was new to the whole magic thing.

She was sure that Wong must have given her the basics of Mystic Arts but probably not much more than that. She knew that anybody could technically learn and practice the Mystic Arts but only the truly magically inclined possessed magical senses. She was starting to wonder if there was more to Rosie than meets the eye. A lot of people were sensitive to magic without even realizing that they were. It would explain why Wong was so attracted to her and why she was so attracted to him. It was something she would be definitely be keeping an eye on and of course she would tell Stephen about it too.

As for right now, she was just happy to continue getting know her. All of the other stuff could come later. They talked about all kinds of other things and it turned out that she had a young daughter too. She hoped that down the road that her daughter and Charlie would become friends as fast as they had.

They continued to talk until she could sense that Stephen and Wong would be back soon. Sure enough, she felt a tiny shift in the sanctum's magic and then a few minutes later they appeared in the lounge and Wong looked absolutely stunned to see Rosie sitting with her. It was clear that he wasn't expecting her to find her way to the Sanctum without him all. The look on his face was hysterical. She and Rosie burst out laughing and Stephen was snickering away next to him.

"Oh Wong, I am sorry but you were taking far too long to take me to the Sanctum and I got curious so I found it myself!" She explained between giggles.

At Rosie explanation, Wong still stood in place stunned stupid and not knowing what to do until Stephen gave him a hearty slap on the back effectively jolting him out of his shock. Stephen let out a jovial laugh.

"Well look at this! Here I thought you didn't have it into you to find yourself a great girl. Boy, was I wrong!" Stephen laughed.

"Oh, um, yeah that's right!" Wong stuttered.

Stephen continued to snicker at him and gave him a playful nudge.

"Whatever you say, Romeo. Let's go and join our lovely ladies instead of staring at them all day, yeah?" He joked.

After Wong finally completely un-froze all of the way, he and Stephen came to join them. They talked all the way up until Charlie woke up from her nap. She knew without a doubt that their lovely 'patchwork family' as Stephen so affectionately called it acquired a new member and she couldn't be happier about it.

Later That Evening
Irena and Stephen where in the bedroom getting ready to try and catch some sleep before Charlie woke up again and needed them again. Almost right after Rosie had left the sanctum, she had begun noticing a slight change in Stephen’s behavior and it was bothering her immensely. He had become abnormally quiet and it was obvious that he had SOMETHING on his mind. What that was, she had no idea.

She honestly wondered if it had something to do with seeing Rosie and missing the days when he had a different girl in his bed every night. Maybe he was getting sick of being tied down to her? She didn't consider herself ugly by any stretch of the imagination but she also knew that being pregnant had changed her body in a lot of ways and it would be unlikely that she would be able to 'bounce back' completely to the way she was before. Stephen told her time and again that he was more than okay with that but now she was seriously starting to wonder if he had been just telling her that to make her feel better.

After she finished changing, she went and sat down onto the bed with her bare feet dangling over the edge. She watched Stephen change into his pajama pants and put his day clothes away wordlessly. She knew that it was probably very stupid to think such things but she didn't know what else could be bothering him so much. She decided that it would just be best to voice her thoughts out right.

"Stephen, do you miss it?" She blurted.

Stephen stopped what he was doing momentarily and looked at her in complete confusion.

"Do I miss what? What are you talking about, sweetheart?" He asked in confusion.

She gave him a look, there was no way in hell that he didn't know what she was talking about.

"You know, your life before this. Having a different girl every night and not being tied down with a family." She elaborated.

Stephen looked at her in shock and immediately stopped what he was doing and came to the side of the bed where she was sitting. He knelt down in front of her and took her small hands in his larger ones. Since all he had on was a pair of pajama pants, she got a very good view of the healing scars that the mutant space crab left behind oh his chest. Stephen hated them but she didn't mind them at all, she had to remind him frequently that scars were ‘hot’ and they didn't making him any less ‘hotter’ than he was. Plus, she had her own scars too so now they were truly a matching set.

He was looking at her with that look she adored so much and she reached up and traced one of the scars on his chest softly. He took her small hand in his once more and placed a tender kiss on it.

"Sweetheart, where in the world did such a thought come from? I love you and our family very much. I would never want to go back to my old life." He intoned tenderly.

Her mismatched eyes softened at what he told her. She knew that deep, deep down that he meant every word but her anxiety still sometimes made her insecure. She had to doubly make sure that wanting to go back to his old life really wasn't the problem. She knew it was dumb but she just had to ask once more to really put her anxiety about it at ease.

"You mean that, right? You are sure that my baby body doesn't bother you or anything like that right?" She mumbled softly.

Giving her a tender look, he reached up and stroked the side of her face softly.
"Oh, my little love. Of course I mean every word. You and Charlie are my whole life now. I wasn't very nice in my old life and I regret more than half the things that I've done in it. The only reason why I don't regret it completely at all is because if I hadn't lived my life the way I had I wouldn't have eventually met you. The life I am living with you now is so, so much better and I would never want to give that up ever." He reassured her fiercely.

He was making sure that she could feel just how much he truly loved her through the bond. It was so undeniably strong and she knew without a doubt that whatever was bothering him it had nothing to do with wanting to go back to his old life at all. She frowned in confusion, if it wasn't that then what in the hell was bothering him so much? She just had to find out.

"Stephen, you've been acting abnormally quiet all afternoon and I don't need the bond to tell me that something isn't right. If that isn't bothering you, what is?" She asked softly.

Immediately, Stephen gave her a look at what she asked him. She knew the look very well. He gave it to her each and every time he was forced to explain to her that he was embarrassed or ashamed about something. Now she really wanted to know what was bothering him so badly so she could fix it for him like she always did.

She could feel shame bleeding through the love that he was feeding to her through the bond and became worried all over again. What in the world was he so ashamed about?

She immediately tried to pull him closer to her. She hooked each leg on either side of his hips and tried to keep him calm however she could. She reached up and started stroking along the sides of his face. She knew that he enjoyed it when she did that most. Sure enough, he began to calm down some.

"Stephen, whatever the matter is it's okay." She comforted.

He let out a soft sigh, she could sense that he was internally debating how to explain to her just what the matter was. Finally, he spoke.

"For the first time in my life I feel old. I could barely get rid of that crab without Wong's help. How can I hope to keep you and Charlie safe? Why would you want to stay with somebody as old as me when you can have somebody your age?" He confessed.

As she listened to his confession, everything began to fall into place. She knew that his inability to take care of the space crab on his own had been bothering him but she had underestimated just how much it had been bothering him. Oh, Stephen.

She would do everything she could to make him think otherwise. She didn't want anybody else, she only wanted him. He was so many things but old was definitely NOT one of them.

"Oh Stephen, you are anything but old. You are the most amazing person I have ever met. I could never want to be with anybody else. Just because you can't take care of something on your own doesn't make you old. It just means that you are only one person and it's okay to ask for help and you know how I know that? A very special, 'not old' somebody that I love very much told me so more than once I might add." She giggled.

Immediately, she began to feel Stephen's shame melt away and she knew that she told him exactly what he needed to hear. It always made her feel so good whenever she made him feel better about something that was bothering him. He was looking down at her very intensely.

"Oh my little love, you are so beyond perfect. You have no idea how much I needed to hear that."
He said, he placed a slow and tender kiss on her lips.

She giggled some more into the kiss and tried to pull him closer.

"Oh, don't I know how perfect I am." She said cheekily.

He made a mock exasperated noise at her cheekiness and deepened the kiss. She could feel his arousal growing through the bond and it was turning her insides molten. She wasted no time in trying to pull him on top of her completely.

She knew exactly how she wanted to show him just how 'not old' he really was.

Several Months Later

Irena

Irena let out a long sigh. Currently, she was putting some of Charlie's baby things into storage she was just about a year old now and didn't use some of her infant things any more. She didn't want to part with anything because she wasn't sure what the future was going to bring and she might need it again someday. Thankfully, Stephen had a whole room dedicated to storage so she was able to stash things away like her baby carrier, baby swing and a bunch of unisex infant clothes until she might need it again one day.

She couldn't believe how big Charlie was getting, she was just about walking, she knew how to say 'mama' and 'dada' and even had some teeth coming in. It was amazing to watch her grow up but some days she couldn't help but miss when she was a newborn. She started reminiscing about the 'good old days' and was so lost in her thoughts that she failed to sense that somebody had entered the room until they were right next to her.

She turned slightly and was shocked to see that Maximus was floating right next to her. She jumped and let out a shocked squeak. After she regained her wits a bit, she glared daggers at him. How she hated it when he pulled that crap!

"Maximus, why are you such an asshole to me all of the time?" She griped.

Maximus outright started laughing at her.

"Hey, I'm not an asshole! It's not my fault you scare so easily!" He laughed.

She rolled her mismatched eyes. She supposed that 'smart ass' Maximus was far better than 'pompous asshole' any day of the week.

"So, did you actually need anything or are you just here to make my life a living hell?" She joked.

Maximus gave her a look of mock exasperation at her cheeky attitude.

"Har, har, very funny! I saw you putting things away in here and became curious. What exactly are you doing?" He asked curiously.

She snickered internally. It seemed that Maximus had to know what everybody was doing all of the time. He was so nosy.

"If you must know, I am storing away some of Charlie's baby stuff incase I need it again." She explained.

Maximus had an interesting look on his face at her explanation.
"Does that mean you are going to have another baby?" He inquired.

She looked at him slightly shocked. She wasn't exactly expecting him of all people to ask her such a question. She got over her shock quickly and shrugged.

"I don't know yet, but it never hurts to be prepared." She shrugged.

"Now shoo! I am trying to get work done here and you are distracting me!" She added in mock exasperation.

Maximus rolled his electric green eyes at her antics but did as she asked of him. She could sense that he knew that it was all in good fun. On his way out of the room, he gifted her with a rude gesture and she returned it with one of her own without any hesitation.

She snickered to herself, 'happy smartass' Maximus was so much better than 'grumpy pompous asshole' Maximus any day of the week. She was amazed at how much good the talk they had all of those months ago had done him. She could sense just how much more happier and at ease he was.

After she finished sorting through all of Charlie's infant clothes and putting them away, she got up and got ready to leave the room. Just as she was about to shut the closet door, something sitting on the top shelf caught her eye. It was the Asgardian spell book that Thor had given for her birthday. It took a moment because it was so large but she managed it down. She looked at the book curiously, she had no idea how in the it ended up there in the first place.

Suddenly, she could feel the Asgardian magic pulsing from it. It felt completely different than the magic she was used to. She decided that it might be a good to show Maximus, Stephen and Wong to see what they thought of it. She exited the storage room and made her way to the library with the book. The closer she got to the library, the more that she could hear that there was some kind of commotion going on inside of it. It was clear that Stephen and Maximus were having a disagreement of some kind and her curiosity became piqued.

'What are they fighting about now?' She wondered to herself in exasperation.

As soon as she entered the library, she saw that Stephen and Maximus were picking at each other about something and Wong was nowhere to be found. That didn't shock her, whenever Stephen and Maximus started picking at each other Wong tended not to stick around and she couldn't blame him for it. That crap was loud and annoying. It took no time at all for Stephen to sense that she was in the library and turn his attention onto her. He had a look on his face that she didn't know quite how to decipher.

"Irena, why does Maximus think you are pregnant again?" He questioned.

Immediately, she put two and two together and just about burst out laughing. Stephen quirked a brow at her reaction.

"Stephen, relax. I was putting away some of Charlie's infant stuff in the storage room and Maximus came in the room wondering what I was doing so I explained to him. He must have misunderstood what I meant." She explained.

She didn't even bother to wait for Stephen to respond to her before she dropped the massive book into the wooden table in front of them.

"Never mind that anyway, look what I found!" She said excitedly.

Both Maximus and Stephen started examining the book. She sensed that Maximus was especially
curious about it.

"Irena, where did you acquire such a book?" He asked curiously.

"Thor gave it to me for my birthday. I kind of forgot about it and it somehow ended up in the storage room." She explained.

Maximus gave her a thoughtful look at the explanation. He reached out as if to touch the book and it let loose some kind of huge magical pulse. She and Stephen looked at him in shock.

"What in the hell WAS that, Maximus?" Stephen asked in shock.

"THAT, was extremely strong Asgardian magic. This book is full of it and extremely powerful spells that a regular Asgardian sorcerer couldn't hope to use. How Thor got a hold of it is beyond me." He told them seriously.

Irena became extremely worried at how serious Maximus was being. She knew that even though he meant well, Thor wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed at the best of times. Who in the hell knew where he got the book from. She turned to Stephen to voice a suggestion.

"Stephen, maybe we should call Tony and see if he knows a way to get a hold of Thor to ask him about the book." She suggested.

Stephen nodded at her suggestion and Maximus gave her a look of approval.

"Yes, do that and do it sooner rather than later. Whoever owns this book will come looking for it. Of that I have no doubt." Maximus said with certainty.

In a Dark Place Very far Away

Mordo

Karl Mordo stood over something lying on a table while he whispered a dark incantation over and over and made a series of complicated hand movements.

He now knew that trying to shatter the bond that his little dragon girl and Strange shared would not work.

He needed to do something much worse than that and he knew exactly what it was.

Spoiler

Stephen

Stephen couldn't believe that it was Charlie's first birthday already. Currently, he was keeping a close eye on her while she was playing with one of the new toys she got. He was amazed at how much she could already do at 1 year old. His favorite thing by far was hearing her call 'Dada' and 'Mama' or reaching out to him or Irena to be picked up and cuddled. It was amazing.

He continued to watch over her carefully. Suddenly, something caught her attention and she started crawling away from her toy. He watched her crawl for a bit until she stopped and sat in place. As she did this, she slid backwards unnaturally yet nothing was there that could cause this. It happened repeatedly, and he frowned.

He definitely smelt a rat and he was going to find out what or who it was.
A/N: Okay and part 1 of the series is done. I hope to have part 2 up and running ASAP so please be on the look out for that!
Hello Everybody!

I just thought I would give an update on what is going down with Practical Magic. I know I promised a part two sooner rather than later. Now it is later and there is still no part two in sight. I promise that I haven't forgotten it I swear up and down. I figured since I have been concentrating so heavily on Professor's Pet lately that everybody waiting so patiently for Practical Magic Part 2 deserves to know what is going on with that.

I am going to be completely honest here, Practical Magic was long, hard and stressful. Since I turned into a part 1 and 2 I decided that I needed a break after part 1 and it would benefit my mental game to concentrate on something else for a bit. I will admit that yes, part of it did have a lot to do with the arsehole who stole my ideas and copied them a shitty fashion. It was so unbelievably hard to deal with that and it took a long time for me to let it go but regardless of that I did need a mental break.

So, The Professor's Pet was born as a form of therapy to deal with the stress and all of that stuff. Since starting it, my muse has sort of run with it and it has taken off. Erin and I have so much of it planned out that it is sort of what we are concentrating on for the time being and I figured letting everybody know that would be the fair thing to do. I promise that when I get a good chunk of Professor's Pet out I will get back to Practical Magic and get Part 2 rolling.

In saying all of this, please don't be afraid to check out The Professor's Pet while you wait for Practical Magic Part 2 to come out. Even though it is completely AU I promise it is totally worth the read and will tide you over until I can get the second part of Practical Magic out. It is a 'what if' sort of story exploring the idea that Stephen became a college professor after his accident and Kamar-Taj and the Mystic Arts never existed at all. It is smutty, gritty and nothing at all like Practical Magic but it is just as fun! So, please don't hesitate to check it out! If you like hot teacher Stephen you will not be disappointed!

Thank you all for listening to my obscenely long note and holding on! I promise you won't be disappointed!

~Ryu

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