Three makes a Pair

by TeaRex

Summary

Incorporating the soulmate AU with personal alterations; an overworked and underpaid nurse encounters the Maximoff Twins. The predestined meeting ignites a plethora of emotions and events when discovered transcribed on your person, is the words spoken on your first meeting. Aka: I’m a greedy bitch and one Maximoff sibling just isn’t enough.

Notes

“...and when one of them meets the other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy and one will not be out of the other's sight, as I may say, even for a moment...” Plato – The Symposium.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

It was post the apparent destruction of Ultron. S.H.I.E.L.D medical personnel were seeing to the injured civilians of Sokovia, brought aboard the Helicarrier, stationary above the desolation below that once resembled a city; the crater like fissure where a large portion of the city was once situated, now barren, an eye-sore upon the face of the Earth. The outer parameter, being what remained of the city, was wreckage, little escaping the destruction of Ultron’s robotic drones and the fighting that had ensued to end his reign of terror and protect the people unjustly caught in the cross-fire. With bated breath, all awaited the incoming relief efforts from neighbouring countries and the Earth’s super-power nations to assist with search parties and beginning the restoration of the flattened city. Miraculously, most injuries consisted of scrapes, bruises, energy related burns, and the odd broken bone or laceration. However, dust inhalation was predominately becoming a common factor.

Knowing the impending battle would require more than tactical efforts from S.H.I.E.L.D, Nick Fury had assembled a majority of S.H.I.E.L.D's medical division to be on stand-by and waiting for the incoming casualties of both military and civilian individuals. With each arrival of civilians from the transportation carriers, unloaded onto the awaiting Helicarrier, medical staff were quick to commence triage; determining who required urgent attention and sorting individuals by categorising them via the severity of their condition. Certain rooms had been designated as part of a filtering system; holding bays and staff communal areas elected to retain waiting and seen persons and the medical rooms for all those where were currently seeking aid.

The medical division had been divided; three quarters handling civilians, and the remaining quarter seeing to the aid of S.H.I.E.L.D personnel and that was just the division aboard the Helicarrier. A separate team had been deployed to the surface along with numerous tactical teams, seeing to those who remained in the war-torn city. You had been stationed in triage, determining the critical urgency of each individual presented by a basic triage assessment that outlined the severity of the patient and filtering them in relation to the information gathered.

Now several hours since the conclusion of the battle, patience and energy was frayed by the hour; at least thirty bodies to one nurse, the language barrier made difficult even with the assistance of a newly developed translation device equipped by each medical staff member, but it was far from perfect, frequently misinterpreting or mistranslating English to Sokovian and vice versa. Factoring in the source for why these people currently occupied an American, militarised aircraft, added to the difficulty. Sokovian’s were proving to be a mixture of obnoxious and wary of the foreign aid. But who could blame them? For centuries their country had been a puppet to foreign power, stunting any possibility of economical growth and once again, and not for the first time, Sokovia had been powerless at the hands of America, indirectly, one of Tony Stark’s inventions. Despite the temporary Sokovian refugees aware of the aid that S.H.I.E.L.D was providing them, approaching families came with some reluctance; it was a lucky draw of either disgusted looks, apprehension, fear, but on few occasions, gratitude, making those moments all the more worth it.

“(Y/N)!"

Your name echoed across the room to where you currently seeing to the cares of the citizens gathered. Each family was provided with blankets, food packets and bottled water. From one individual to the next, each individual need was attended to, whether it is someone requiring more water, assisting them to the bathroom, or checking intravenous therapy. Pardoning yourself, you make your way to the male nurse who didn’t bother to meet you at least half way.

“Dr. Bamu awaits your assistance in treatment room three. I am to relieve you.” Douglas Blair, his
name was. A born and bred Scotts-man through and through and an experienced field nurse who had
served in Afghanistan as well as other various militarised operations. Everyone had stories before
their recruitment to S.H.I.E.L.D. The late thirty year old nurse’s expression was gruff, clearly put out
at the order. There was no point inquiring about the reassignment, for Douglas would halt your
questioning and chastise you for questioning the order of a superior.

“Oh ok. I’ll give you handover of the situation here then.”

“What else would you do?” the sarcasm evident in his voice. Your brow twitches at the comment.
“Those here have been treated and are currently waiting to be relocated to the surface; ETA one hour
from now. All were triaged and categorised no higher than category four. There are nine families in
total, the remaining are those separated or either singles. The Tkachenko family there-” and you point
to the family with whom you were previously with, “- no known allergies for all members. The
daughter however, nine years of age, is asthmatic and dust inhalation has aggravated her breathing.
She presented with laboured breathing and chest pain. She has since been treated, experiencing no
tightness of her chest and is settled and calm. We are continuing observations before her departure,”
holding a tablet in-hand, you scroll through the information documented, listing all the individuals in
the room; their aliment and all necessary information.

“I’m in the process of finalising some loose ends and seeing to their general needs,” handing the
tablet to Douglas who scans through the data with a critical eye. With no further word, he walks off
in the direction of the Tkachenko family, continuing to read the information. With one last look about
the room, you exit the room. No more than ten minutes later, bypassing many, nods and greetings
exchanged here and there, you arrive that the medical bay, probably the busiest section of the entire
aircraft. Weaving through, you make your way to treatment room where your presence is expected.
Dr. Bamu is found scrutinising a tablet, brows furrowed with concentration.

“Hi Doc,” the greeting casual as you approach Dr. Bamu, Cheif Medical Officer. The Zimbabwean
born doctor was of a short stature, 5”5 you estimated, but a hell of an attitude to company it. She was
stern and critical, but calm and collect among chaos. On first acquaintance, she had made you
nervous; her strict ‘no nonsense’ attitude making had you second guessing and tripping over yourself.
As time had worn on you had discovered that despite the blunt attitude, she was nurturing; no
question left unanswered and encouraging the best of all. Now on a more familiar basis, you knew
when to play is safe around her or when a little work-place silliness could go un-reprimanded. It
wasn’t until you were at her side that she acknowledged your presence, in her usual way.

“Do you see what I have had to put up with?” the question rhetorical and it wasn’t hard to deduce
what she was referring to. “I have the medical staff scattered from one end of this flying monstrosity
to other, tending to patients in lounges, not befitting the required care!”

“Considering the situation, everyone is lucky that only minor care was required,” aiming to mediate
the situation. “It was only a temporary solution.”

“And this Helicarrie is not equipped to handle such a high patient influx! And not only that, the
dangers of staff being stretched too thin; accidents will happen,” she continues, your comment
ignored in her ranting. “Fury will be hearing from me!” she declares with a huff. “Do you have an
update for me, (Y/L/N)?”

“All boarded Sokovian civilians have received their required treatment at the hands of Dr Uvivie and
Dr Edison’s team and those remaining are being monitored in the designated communal rooms. I
have received confirmation that within the hour, the last of the citizens will be relocated to the surface
below where our away team is currently situated. Aid from the UK, Switzerland and Ukraine has
arrived and are commencing humanitarian services. Incoming forces from the USA are expected,”
you summarise the information that had been sent via message not long prior to you reassignment. Dr. Bamu nods in understanding.

“I trust all went well with you, Doc?” you inquire. Dr. Bamu was in charge of S.H.I.E.L.D personal brought back injured or at the conclusion of their mission. “Nothing I haven’t seen before” she replies curtly. At last, she glances at you, her expression stern; lips pursed and brows furrowed. The tablet in hand is passed to you and it’s taken without question. Looking to the screen, it was a digitalised, classified file. Dr. Bamu’s authorisation has already granted permission for viewing and you peer at the screen curiously. The file comprises of scientific data; reports, exerts on genetic manipulation, and the utilisation of alien power sources.

‘Human experimentation?’

“We have some Grade 'A' meat on the slab,” she states but with an air of apprehension. ‘Grade A meat’ was a satirical code used among the medical division. It stemmed from evaluation system used to grade the quality of beef, numerous factors determining it’s value. The most desirable, expensive and top tier was 'prime' also known as grade 'A', and 'A' is for Avenger; among other similarities. Staff had adopted this code to signal that they would be attending to an Avengers member. So it couldn't be said that D. Bamu wasn't without a sense of humour considering she advocated the trend.

You look to Dr. Bamu, surprised, “I thought you would have seen all them all by now?” Dr. Bamu was the personal physician to each Avengers member – even the charismatic Tony Stark. She liaises with Dr. Wu and other specialists due to health complexities of several members e.g. Bruce Banner's gamma infused DNA and Steve Rogers 'Super Soldier Serum' physiology. Funny enough, the stress and effort lied in rounding them up, all be childishly adverse.

“I have,” she counters, “Even that feathered brain fool, Barton. Bullet wounds! Bullet wounds he had, yet there he was, waltzing around as if he had mosquito bites! The negligence of his welfare astounds me,” she huffs in irritation. You purse your lips in an effort to suppress your smile at Bamu's exaggeration.

“There are two new additions,” nodding to the tablet you hold. With a flicker of excitement at the revelation, eagerly you swipe through the classified information until stopping at a S.H.I.E.L.D intelligence report.

Name: Wanda Maximoff
Species: Human
Gender: Female
Citizenship: Sokovian
Affiliation: HYDRA (formerly), Ultron (formerly)
Powers: Neuro-electric interfacing, telekinesis, mental manipulation. Please see expanded report.
**Name:** Pietro Maximoff  
**Species:** Human  
**Gender:** Male  
**Citizenship:** Sokovia  
**Affiliations:** HYDRA (formerly), Ultron (formerly)  
**Powers:** Increased metabolism and improved homeostasis. Please see expanded report.

The brief summary proves intriguing and somewhat startling. The first of these startling facts being that they - the Maximoff siblings – were citizens of Sokovia. The second that they were formerly affiliated with the likes of HYDRA and Ultron, both being responsible to the devastation of their country. Had they joined these terrorists with the knowledge of what awaited their country? Had they sought personal gain? What caused they to renounce their affiliation? Had S.H.I.E.L.D found them too dangerous to be left unmonitored? And third, that they both had powers, somewhat like Steve Rogers and Bruce Banner, though were they biological born or acquired, as they had acquired theirs? The multitude of forming questions and perusal of the file is halted as Dr. Bamu draws your attention again.

“As official members of the Avengers and associates of S.H.I.E.L.D, a comprehensive medical examination and all accompanying assessments are required effective immediately,” and you nod in understanding. “You will assist me, Nurse (Y/L/N).”

“Why not, Douglas?” asking the question that had been on your mind since your reassignment as the former was more than qualified and more experienced.

“The situation is-” and Dr. Bamu pauses, “-delicate,” emphasis made apparent, “As I was so informed. It was suggested that my accompanying nurse be of a civil manner. That Douglas is uncouth,” she ‘tsks’.

“And you chose me?” you snort.

“It’s an improvement, yes. You have an air about you, some finesse,” she motions with her hand.

Pulling a face at the description, “If you say so.”

“I say so. Now enough chatter.”

The dismissive comment prompts you to start gathering the necessary equipment that will be required during the examination. Walking about the treatment room, all items are neatly stacked – mess being an untolerated pet peeve of Bamu’s – atop a trolley that you pull along as you walk about.

“I will commence the introductions. Enter when ready.” You watch as Dr. Bamu exits into the adjourning examination room, note book and pen in-hand. Despite the advance technology, Dr. Bamu still utilised 'old fashioned' utensils, often heard complaining about digitalised nuisance that computers were and the reliability that would always be a pen and paper. You smile at the thought, gathering the last of the equipment. Looking at the tablet again, you exit the classified files, hoping to read them post the examination, curiosity peaked at the information.

The automated doors slide open and the trolley is pushed ahead into the adjourning room to reveal a
commotion. The air is tense, your human sixth sense prickling at the feeling. Standing at the second entry to the examination room is a S.H.I.E.L.D officer; suited with a gun evidently at a ready, stance ridged and eyes intent on the scene. It's startling to note the presence of Captain America, Steve Rogers; geared still, post battle markings still evident on his uniform, surprise at his unexpected presence. His hands are clenched at his sides as he stands two meters from the examination bed, attention glued to the two unknown individuals there. Dr. Bamu is by his side, also fixated on the two individuals.

‘The Maximoff’s,’ you note.

A young woman, Wanda, is perched on the edge of the bed, with the male, Pietro, leaning down to eye level, cupping either side of her face with his hands. Their faces are indistinguishable due to your positioning but their fierce whispers in Sokovian identify the nature of the situation; urgency is evident in the male’s voice, his tone consoling. The women’s are few but pained. Abandoning the trolley, hesitantly you approach, unconsciously clearing your throat.

Addressing Dr. Bamu, softly you question, “Um, is everything alright, Dr. Bamu?”

The reaction to your voice is instantaneous; the back of the one you have deduced to be Pietro Maximoff, straightens from his leaned position over the woman, his head whipping around to stare at you. Unexpectedly, a nauseating sensation engulfs your body and you falter at the feeling. Pietro, eyes blue and piercing, stare at you, his expression wild. Breaking the contact, averting from the intensity, you look to the woman, who too, is staring. She is pale and looks sickly, but her eyes are alight and unwavering. You can't fathom the reasoning for their reaction; had you interrupted their moment?

'Shit, I think I'm going to puke.' You wrangle all self-control, willing your body to cease and desist. You had felt fine, no, one-hundred percent all day. Scrunching your eyes shut for moment, trying to orientate yourself, you open them to find the brother before you. Yelping at the sudden shock and stumbling backwards, you gauge him, expression frightful.

The room explodes into action; the guard step forward, gun raised and Steve Rogers strides forward, hand extended to grab at the white-haired man. Dr. Bamu looks on, expression harden but a note of fear in her eyes. Wanda continues to sit upon the edge of the bed, gaze never leaving your form. The man who had sided with the likes of HYDRA and Ultron is before you and his manner wild; oddly coloured hair whip-lashed, darkened circled eyes emphasising the blue irises, the manic expression more than unsettling, especially at such a close proximity. All form tactical and self-defence training is non-existent in that moment, the situation paralysing any coherent thought but:

‘What the fuck?!!’ Taking a step forward, his body taunt, and hands clenched at his sides, he closes the gap again and you stare on, body numb but the nauseating feeling pumping through your being. Leaning forward, marginally, the next moment breaks the tension.

“Ours. You are ours,” the four lettered sentence is gritted out, the Sokovian accent thick and all too familiar. His meaning is unfathomable and but you frown, fear evaporating from your being as the presumptuous words rekindle some defiance and elicit a retort.

“Excuse me?!” expression incredulous, countering his glare with one of your own. By now Steve Rogers has reached Maximoff, apprehending him by the upper-arm, jerking him backwards.

“Maximoff! What hell has gotten into you?” the authoritative tone asks accusingly, Steve Rogers was gone, before everyone now was Captain America. The Maximoff sibling redirects his attention to him.
“Release me,” comes the biting reply as he pulls futility at the iron clad grip. They continue to squander and with the white-haired Maximoff distracted, you make for the safety of Dr. Bamu’s company.

“Are you alright?” she asks, her concern reassuring. You nod, however feeling shaken from what transpired. Pietro Maximoff’s heated glare flickers between you and Captain America, rebuffing questions. Willing to relinquishing some professionalism, you glare back, crossing your arms across your chest, simultaneously finding the act comforting. Looking to the other sibling still situated on the bed, she scrutinises from her held position and you find her eyes more unnerving than that of her brothers; as if she saw through you, if your body were a plain of glass and so effortlessly observed was the circling cogs that was your mind. The metaphorical thought is disconcerting, more than you had anticipated. Squaring your shoulders, you muster an expression of irritability, aiming to expression you disapproval for her unwarrented attention.

'The fuck is their problem?!!' you think, frustration mounting, and the woman flinches, dramatically so and you find the reaction odd. She clasps her head, evidently pained, and your concern piques. Admittedly, you want to demand her for an explanation but before the thought can be translation into action, the brother is at his sisters side in an instant; too quick as per human standards.

'Super-speed?' Protectively, he places a hand upon her head, evidently concerned and she mutters a reply a question he never verbalised. They share a look, meaningless to others and a whole conversation to them and unabashed, they openly stare at you and you blanch, the sickening sensation churning in your stomach, radiating throughout your body. Slowly, the sister stands, interlacing her fingers with her brothers. ‘Perhaps they're afflicted? Delirium? Post traumatic stress?’ You look on, puzzled, still a little frightened, and ill. All feelings not a good combination. She takes a step forward, mouth opening but the moment is broken when Captain Rogers steps between, separating the siblings from yourself, extending an arm to halt her movement. Funny enough, you were curious with what you might have had to say.

He looks accusingly between each party before saying, “Alright, I don't know what is going on here, but you two,” and he points to the Maximoff's, expression stern, “Take a seat and I will deal with you in a minute.” Looking back to yourself and then at Dr. Bamu he continues, “Doctor, I think it best if you reassign your nurse,” and with a forced expression of sympathy he glances at you briefly and adds, “No offense.”

But offense was taken and you bristle at the implication that you’re at fault, shooting Captain Rogers an irritated look. You hadn't done anything! And why did you feel so sick?! Dr. Bamu frowns at the recommendation but signals for you to leave. Relief swells at the yearning need to distance yourself from everyone and you make for the exit only to be halted by a sound of protest. Looking back in the direction of the siblings, the brother has tried to step forward only to be held back back the sister, their hands still intertwined and another hand clutching at his elbow. Their faces a mixture of intensities, but oddly now, pained. With a final frown directed to them, you continue forward with Bamu’s voice fading behind.

“If you would give me a moment, but I expect on my return there to be no repeat of what just transpired nor any future threat towards my staff, for I will not tolerate it, Captain Rogers,” and Dr. Bamu looks pointedly at him and Maximoff’s before striding off. He might be Captain, but she was the current Chief Medical Officer, and within in her division, what she said was followed to the 'T'. You have since swiped your key-card, unlocking the door to the treatment room. Exhaustion plagues your body, walking sluggishly to a near-by stool; you sit down, resting your head in your hands, elbows atop your thighs. Following behind, Dr. Bamu rounds on you, hands on her hips, chest puffed out and gaining an extra inch or two as she aims to.
“What in the seven depths of hell was that?” the shrieking accusation comes and you cringe at her voice, all manner of sounds and light aggravating your current deposition.

“You're asking me?” you reply back tiredly, looking up to meet Bamu who personifies a stern parent awaiting the confession of a child caught. Sighing, “I swear, until just now, I have never seen those two before.” pained sincerity evident in your voice. “I have no explanation for their actions.” Bamu relaxes, albeit slightly and tsks as she does frequently.

“You have lost some colour,” the comment blunt as she notes your sickly demeanor.

“Honestly, I've felt better,” you mutter, feeling the effect as another wave of nausea rips across your body; teeth gritted, eyes scrunch, and toes curling. Bamu watches on, critical in her observation.

“You are relieved of duty,” and none would argue with her tone. “Rest and should you still be ill in a couple hours time, notify me,” that motherly concern present for a mere moment.

“What of a replacement-” but she cuts you off.

“I will handle that. Go now,” and she motions in your direction, shooing you from the room. Dr. Bamu can be heard calling in a replacement as you step from the room. Trudging back to the shared staff quarters, people bustling past, no doubt readying for the department of the last, temporary Sokovian residents. The bedroom to yourself, there is not hesitation stripping off your uniform to your underwear, crawling under the sheets, the sickly feeling having not diminished. With a final thought, you're honest when you hope to not encounter the Sokovian siblings for at least an extended period of time; for working on the same team, it was inevitable that your paths would cross again but, and you hope, under different circumstances.

To be continued.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Fucking 6k this chapter is, wtf. I'm sorry in advance.

Chapter Notes

“What’s the difference?” I asked him. “Between the love of your life, and your soulmate?”

“One is a choice, and one is not.”

— Tarryn Fisher, Mud Vein

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Waking is like a light being switched on. There is nothingness; no conscious concept of self or the world around. Then comes the surge of electricity, just like a florescent lights stalled flickering with that rattly buzz they make before popping on. What once was a void is now illuminated to reveal...everything - in a slow, goggier way. Waking is just like that.

Consciousness alert, you lie there, eyelids weighted with sleep. Allowing a minute to orientate yourself, memories of the past day recycle, reminding you of recent events; S.H.I.E.L.D, Ultron. Sokovia. War. Casualties. Aid. The Maximoff’s.

Eyes open, you stare at the metal wall, that final thought repeating; The Maximoff’s. The Maximoff’s. The enigma that they were. Rolling over and emitting a groan, you discard the thought as you push yourself up, sliding your feet to the cold floor. Groggy, furry mouthed, and still fatigued, you're at least pleased to note that the nausea has subsided entirely. Sitting on the edge of the bed, rubbing the sleep from your eyes, a few seconds are needed to accustom the soles of your naked feet to the chilling cold of the floor. Pushing from the bed and padding across the room to the intercom system, the communication code for the main medical bay is keyed in, the glow of the screen illuminating your face in a blue hue. The intercom beeps at the confirmation of the connection.

“Med. Atkins speaking,” the familiar monotone voice emits through the speaker, having selected the voice only option, disabling the video setting.

“Hey, Pat, it's me,” your voice croaks.

“Oi, (Y/N). Recovered?” Atkins tone heightening in interest, no doubt privy to your condition.

“Better,” honest in your reply; for no longer being plagued with nausea, you still felt off, but unable to specify exactly how. “Can you give me an update?”

“We'll be home bound in two hours, thirteen minutes. There are three inpatients in surg-med. It's pretty routine at the moment. We're all itching to get back,” you hum in acknowledgment of the
information. “What's your plan?” There is a pause before your reply, mulling over your answer.

“I'll shower and then come down, assist with prepping for disembarkment,” feeling better, there was no reason for you to not return to work.

“Well, I'm starved. Goin' grab some grub, want something?”

“Yea, sure. But one of those protein drinks. Don't think I can stomach anything else,” physically grimacing at the thought of heavy flavoured food.

“Right. See you soon then,” and the intercom beeps, signalling the end of the call.

The shower, although quick, is exactly what you needed, the effect revitalising. Grabbing a towel, it encompasses your wet locks and it twisted to sit atop your head. Another is used to dry your body, limb by limb, then wrapping the towel in the usual fashion around your torso. Absent minded, moisturiser is lathered on, peace of mind as the task is continued; a hand slides up and down your left forearm, massaging in the cream. During the conduct, odd colouring captures your attention. Your arm is brought to eye level, examining the skin of the inner arm. Peering closely, strikes of silvery coloured marks pattern across the length of the forearm. The patterns appeared as if they were a white tattoo but with a silvery tint. Within seconds, you ascertain that the pattern is in fact script, words expanding the length of the limb.

“Ours. You are ours.”

Brows crinkled at the odd sentence before your mind flashes with a vivid recollection; the sudden appearance of the white haired Sokovian before you, eye glowering as he utters those exact four words; your heart speeds up, hammering internally.

“Ours. You are ours.”

How? How have those words come to be imprinted on your person? Racking your mind for an explanation, it's a pointless endeavour. You rub the area profusely only to irritate the skin to the point manifesting a red rash. With an alternative attempt using your nail, you pick the lettering only to earn pain. However it got there, it's apparently skin.

"This is some Umbridge bullshit!” you curse.

Perhaps he was responsible? The thought is ridiculous and illogical in all possible sense but how else would it explain the words now imprinted into your flesh. Gripping the sink, steadying your wavering stance as vertigo distorts your balance; your eyes scrunch closed, white specks appearing sporadically due to the intensity. With deep even breaths, you aim to induce some sort of equilibrium and calm yourself. The best solution you settle on – for the moment - is ignorance, because history and human example has proved a guaranteed success rate, had it not.

Resorting to severe actions, you adopt a wrist length, long sleeved shirt to wear beneath your nursing tunic, despite the reluctance at the prospect of being too hot. However, you wouldn’t be tempted to stare at your uncovered arm, contemplating the source of its unexpected appearance, nor would it entice unwanted questioning from others. You grimace, gut instinct telling you that somehow, life was about to reach a new level complicated.
The medical bay is like the calm after the storm; debris and damage everywhere. Paper littered bench tops, equipment requiring sterilisation and tidying, bins needing emptying, stock forms to be completed, review of civilian treatment cares, and that listed what you could only see.

“Oi,” the voice capturing your attention. Turning, you smile on seeing Patricia Atkins, known as Pat; 6’2 with broad shoulders and an athletic build hidden beneath her scrubs; often drawing similarities to a basket or netball player from new acquaintances. “My damsel in distress,” she greets teasingly, arms full of glorious sustenance.

“Far from it,” grabbing hold of the drink extended.

“Besides avoiding another world-wide crisis; the addition of freaky sibling duo and your encounter is the next hot topic,” Pat comments casually. “There's word something happened. Something involving medical staff. Not too hard for someone to figure out it was you.” You listen whilst eagerly sipping on the straw, appreciative of the drinks cooling sensation as it travels down your oesophagus to pool in your stomach.

“Well you'll be disappointed to know that it wasn't anything exciting,” and Pat eyes you critically at your attempt to rebuff the explanation.

“Were you hurt?” Pat's hardened tone drawing your attention.

“Jesus, is that what people think?!” almost choking on your reply.

“You were relived from duty due to medical technicalities, and have been locked away in your quarters for the past five hours. What did you expect people to think?” her reasoning logical, you admit.

“Ok, yes, I wasn't feeling well, but that was pure coincidence,” and the unsaid 'however' lingers, drawing out the silence.

“What were they like?” Pat was sharp and easily deduced from your answers that despite no physical harm to your person, something had transpired between yourself and the Sokovian siblings to have instigated the circling gossip.

“They were…intense, to put it mildly. More so the brother, but I haven't the faintest clue why,” you admit solemnly and that is as truthful as you would allow yourself to be.

“Did they say anything to you?” Pat prompts. You feel yourself tense at her question, mind narrowing to the hidden markings on your arm.

“No,” the reply croaking and you clear your throat in haste, “No nothing. Tight-lipped.”

“You are being particularly vague, though I can't fathom why,” she presses.

'Just trying to protect myself,' you think. Pat was kind but prone to protective tendencies, which were unnecessary but you found it comforting all the same. “Just trying to put it behind me,” your tone indicating your need to cease the topic. And persist, Pat did not. She was observant like that, which you appreciated and admired, however that observant nature could be a double edge sword. With one last critical stare, she takes a bite of her food and you continue to sip the drink. You hear her gag.

“How do you drink that shit?” not disguising her disgust. You return the comment by gurgling a mouthful, eyes alight with laughter. A snort escapes Pat's throat as she shoves you playfully.

The following hour continues in anticipation of returning to base; mundane duties procrastinated by
the banter between yourselves. However, those silent moments when the both of you actually concentration to complete work allow your mind to drift back to the haunting fact recently discovered, and to forget it is proving harder each time. It has exceeded to the point of trying to rationalise how the script has appeared. No scientific explanation can logically account for the miraculous phenomenon – scratch that, miraculous it was not, a curse more adequately described it. Tempted you were to examine your skin under a microscope or shave a skin sample for testing, but to secretly conduct such was near impossible and would eventually gain the attention of someone, which would then lead to undoubtedly explaining your predicament, then becoming a science experience and being locked away.

'Ok, that's an overreaction,' you muse, but it wasn't improbable.

But if science could not explain the source, then what was left to consider? A large percentage of your profession was founded by science - science was everything; more than a thousand years of systematic study that had advance the technique of health care. If not science, then what? Then a thought, as if a match is lit, triggers – what you to believe to most illogical idea and a succession of theories, if they could be called such.

The parallels linking the Maximoff's, their odd behaviour, and the period of time between being tattoo free to having unknowingly visited a tattoo parlor and having an unseemly script imprinted on your person, was now becoming suspect. Abilities! They had abilities! And for the life of you, you can't remember what they were. Perhaps that was the explanation. But in order to confirm your theory, you needed to see that classified files that Dr. Bamu had, which would mean requesting permission to view them. Which would undoubtedly require you to provide the reasoning for such a request, and lying wasn't exactly your strongest trait - in the case of lying to Bamu, that is.

The turbulent thought process is disorientating, oblivious to your activity, body on auto-pilot, a box of medicated ampoules is knocked to the floor, the force shattering the glass and spilling the liquid in a hazardous mess. Stunned for a moment, mind processing what just happened, you kneel to floor, however unceremoniously falling to your bottom as a wave of vertigo disorientates your balance. A shout sounds from across the room, and you hear the hasty footsteps as Pat rushes to your side. Clutching your head, eyes squeezed tight, you wait as the spinning sensation eases.

“Hey, hey! Are you alright?” the concern woven inquiry comes, her hand is placed on the middle of your back in a concerned gesture. Pat receives only a strained hum in reply, and her brows furrow at your state. “Give me something here, (Y/N),” her voice urgent.

“Just...just some vertigo,” you manage. The effect is lessening but now you're feeling hot, the heat creeping along the back of your neck and upwards.

“You're flushed,” she notes, proceeding to place the back of her hand against your forehead. At this, your eyes open only to amplify the spinning effect. “You have a temp. For starters, that long sleeved shirt isn't helping,” plucking at the material of your arm.

“I'm fine,” forcing your voice to be calm, “It might be the stress of it all. You know. Ultron has been my debut in the field after all,” smiling meekly at her. Pat visibly clenches her teeth, the muscles of her jaw flexing at the action.

“Come,” she prompts, and with her aid, she assists you from the ground and escorts you to a seat. Leaving you here with water in hand, she proceeds to clean the mess made. Pat, although quiet, is resisting the urge to grill you regarding your current condition, as it is not without suspicion. Only hours previous were you ill, although no specific details divulged by yourself or Dr. Bamu, it could be speculated that it was minor. However, seemingly recovered on your presentation to med, only an hour later to befall another ailment. Pat was not oblivious at your reluctance to detail the
transgression with the Sokovian siblings, but in relation to your health, she saw no connection. Despite this, something regarding your interaction with the siblings was off, but as a matter of priority, your current state was more concerning.

Simultaneously, you are mulling over thoughts of your own. Staring at nothing in-particular, you sip the water, mind again focused on the matter before your clumsy mistake. You needed access to Bamu's files, the need so achingly bad because they might just hold the key for what you need to know. The desire to relieve yourself of the extra layering of clothing is tortuously tempting, feeling the heated flush of your cheeks, but for what that would be worth would only prove to complicate the situation, and so far, only yourself involved, with the likely addition of another two. If it proved that the siblings - more so, Pietro - were in fact responsible, you would willing confront him about it, despite your reluctance to see them again.

“Where is Dr. Bamu?” drawing Pat's attention from her task. She stares curiously, calculating your reasoning for wanting to see the doctor.

“No doubt making Fury's ears bleed,” she replies, almost too casually. You remain seated, waiting the Pat's inquisitive question as to why you want to know the whereabouts of said doctor. But nothing comes and you watch her, suspicion spiking; for Pat although intuitive, asked questions first then went Sherlock on your arse.

“If you plan to stick around, make yourself useful by completing the care plans,” she suggests. She has played you and you know it, purposefully tasking you with a job so that you remain seated and not stumbling about which you suspect would happen, a liability to yourself and the workplace. Pat know you're too stubborn to leave, so keeping you busy with minor work and under her watchful eye is what she intended. Another hour passes, staff coming and going, Pat's continued but poorly disguised spying, your continued typing and reading of reports, all the while battling sporadic waves of vertigo. It's baffling. While no longer feeling sick, with the room continuing to spin as it does.

Fifteen minute notice is given for the approaching disembarkment and the need anxiously swells to be off the 'flying monstrosity' as you have heard it described. Protocols completed, staff file off the Helicarrier stationed in the underground hanger bay, which on first sighting, the magnitude of the area had literally dropped your jaw, the technological sophistication being science fiction-esque. The newly established S.H.I.E.L.D base, situated undisclosed in upper state, New York. S.H.I.E.L.D had accommodated for staff wanting to live on base, residential quarters available; mostly international or interstate staff without the means to buy or rent locally. The rent was significantly cheaper, the base itself practically a miniaturised, underground metropolis. With the remainder of the day free, you fail to locate Dr. Bamu, mind targeted on achieving your priority. In the end, you settle on an early retirement, and if by some cursed fate, the mark remains, you will continue the next day.

On awakening, immediately you throw back the covers to reveal your arm, but disappointed is met on inspection, begrudgingly noting the defined script still present. Grumbling inwardly, you ready for a 0730 start; clothed and fed, hastily walking through the corridors in eager rush to locate with Dr. Bamu. Asking her permission was your first step. If that didn't succeed, you would resort to a more 'illegal' form of acquirement. Over the past year, you had befriended a guy in operations; more than computer savvy, access grants exceeding most, and desirable hacking skills should that be required. Taking a turbo lift to a lower level, you exit, spring in step and just a little rushed. Admittedly, you feel happier today, albeit determined to have your crisis resolved. There was no intention of continuing the remainder of your life with stupid words enscripted on your skin – especially without your intention.
Destination but fifty meters ahead, nothing prepares you for the explosion of pain that expands across your temples. The sudden attack has you back-peddling, clutching the either side of your head. Folding in on yourself, head lowered, you're blind to your surroundings, forcing the heels of your hands in a pressurous manner against the indent of the temporal region. If the pressure of your hands is painful, it's not noticeably with the splitting agony befalling you. Dropping to the ground, fetal in position, screams are heard, but if they're your own, you wouldn't the know, the sound puncturing every fibre of your being. Tears run free, and you feel like your head will implose on itself, the pressure and pain surpassing the threshold. Voices far and near, incoherent and indistinguishable, and pain, so much; it's the last recollection before you pass out.

’Gah, why am I in bed?’ the cushioned surface evident against your back. Slowly, eyes open and peering, you absorb the surrounding environment, noting the familiar med bay. You don't recall having actually reached it, although recollecting the eagerness of your journey. Pushing against your elbows, upper-body forced upwards as your predicament is analysed. A dull throb radiates across your head and it serves as the reminder to what happened. Instinctively, a hand is brought to your head and you massage a temple, reflecting on the stressing but clouded memory.

’What is happening to me?! Nausea, vertigo and now this!’ Licking your lips, you flinch when you feel a throb of pain. Touching your bottom lip, you note it's swollen. Testing your tongue also you note the tender sensation, theorising you bitten both it and your lip, a linger of iron still present. A frustrated sigh is released.

“Officer (Y/L/N), you’re awake,” the nurse states the obvious. You recognised them but can’t recall their name.

“Dually noted,” unable to resist the sarcastic remark. The nurse looks at you, unimpressed.

“I was hoping that you might be exempted from the stereotype that health care professionals make the worst patients,” he replies evenly, “How silly of me,” throwing the sarcasm back full-force. “I'm Officer Thurston, your nurse. Can you tell me how you’re feeling?” The following ten minutes consisted of routine health question, only that you were used to being the one asking them, not being subjected. With any imminent danger to your health dismissed, Thurston concludes.

“You have a visitor waiting. Do you feel well enough to see them,” he questions. You nod, suspecting it was Pat and you cringe at her predicted reaction. “I'll let them know,” and he departs. You twiddle your fingers in anticipation, both for seeing your awaited guest, and to continue on with your goal before this unforeseeable event.

“Officer (Y/L/N),” the deep set voice greets. Steve Rogers stands at the foot of the bed, arms parallel, posture stiff and straight, consequential of a long time serving military officer. You're shocked. Of all people, who would expect to be visited by Steve Rogers, American hero and world saver. In the span of twelve hours, no less.

“Captain Rogers,” the formality is returned, and all you can do is remain as you are, awaiting his eventual reasoning for his visitation.

“I hope you are recovered,” he's slightly awkward in his address, small talk obviously not an easy trait for him. While the courteous effort is appreciated, it is but belaying what you want to hear.

“Much so. It was only a migraine,” and his sudden change from awkward school boy, to calculative strategist is instantaneous, eyes critical in their assessment of your reply. You remain neutral of expression, intent to not portray the uncomfortability of the critique.

“You have not been well of late,” the statement prompting an elaborative response on your part.
“A little under the weather you might say, but nothing serious,” simplistic and feeding Rogers informative curiosity.

“For how long?”

You mull over the question, estimating the sudden onset of sickness that had struck the day before, “Yesterday, early afternoon.” You watch as he nods, absorbing the information.

“And the onset of your migraine?” he persists; your narrowed eyes gauge him, trying to determine his aim.

“I was on my way to work, estimate oh-seven-twenty hours.”

“Would you class that incident as nothing serious?” emphasising the point with your exact words.

“Like I said, it was a migraine,” your reply only a little hesitant but you're not sure if he noticed.

“A migraine that had you screaming bloody murder, collapsed upon the floor trying to crack open your skull?” his tone is accusing but it sheds some light on what happened. You had suspected you had been screaming but it had sounded like it was overheard. “Underplayed, don't you think?”

“I don’t quiet recall...not all of it” forcing an even reply.

“Well that's the account I've been given-”

And you cut him off, formalities be damned, “Then why bother asking?”

“Because it would indicate if you had something to hide,” his tone steady but the words weighted. You shrink, wishing the bed would swallow you.

“Officer (Y/L/N), has something happened as of yesterday?” the question is pressed.

“I've been ill, on and off, that's all,” your voice quiet. Rogers exhales in a frustration but does not prompt further. The silence stretches before Rogers speaks again.

“I have been forceful in my address, I apologise. But there might be something at work here, and it's not just you at risk. Any information could help,” if ever Rogers were going to plead, that was it just now. You don't know what else to tell him. But that was a lie in itself. If you were to ever get the answers you were seeking, now might be the time. You hadn't considered until that your cursed mark and your illness may be related. The thought baffling, but if there were anyone who dealt – on a daily basis – with baffling and strange occurrences, it was Steve Rogers, and he could attest to that himself. With a moment's hesitance, you hope you won't regret this. Sliding back the sleeve of your arm, the secret is revealed extended towards Rogers, presentation of his answer. He inspects brows drawn together, confusion evident.

“It appeared yesterday, I'm not sure when,” however suspecting the particular time, “It's what he said to me,” you explain, voice hushed. Rogers looks to you then, still at a loss to your meaning. “Pietro Maximoff,” at last voicing your suspected source of your unrequited mark. Rogers’ expression hardens further at your revelation, straightening from his bent position from the inspection. He looks between you and the mark before looking off into the distance; mind evidently spiraling.

“Thank you,” he announces before his hasty departure. Immediately you regret your actions, shielding your eyes with your arm. Slamming the other arm against the bed in frustration, miserably you question why all of this is happening. Of all things, you don't want to jeopardize your job but you dismally foresee a discharge coming your way.
"(Y/N)! God, are you ok," you jumped at the sudden exclamation, looking to your bedside.

"Pat?" you acknowledge weakly, too tired to fake it.

“What the hell is goin' on?” she accuses, the question forceful. You stare numbly away from her. Honestly, you had no answers, only questions of your own. "What aren't you telling me?" playing down the accusing tone, pleading.

“It's classified,” too tired to fake positivity. It wasn't a lie, not entirely. Rogers hadn't needed to say anything for you to know that the situation wasn't to be discussed openly, nor did you want to. The fewer who knew the better - especially her.

"That's bullshit!" she retorts but you remain mute, no intention to give in. Stubbornness, while not favourable, was one of your mastered attributes. Pat stands by, observing your solemn form and concludes that she won't succeed. After a few minutes, Pat speaks, “There is more to your condition, I know that much. But if you ever need help, count on me to be there. Always,” the offer although serious, is genuine in nature and your expression softens.

“Always,” you confirm.

"Do you know what happens now?"

"No. It's a waiting game," and how true that was, you chuckle despondently.

Time passes, how much, you're unsure; an hour or two perhaps. Pat has since left, having urged her to leave and return to her duties. Though reculant, she complride before promising to check on your later. You're torn between missing her presence and the mixture of loathing the solitude and finding peace in it. Having received explicit instructions from Officer Thurston to remain in bed, you wouldn't be surprised if the order had in-fact been passed down the chain of command. You wonder how Rogers is utilising the information you gave him, had he been successful where you had not? You receive your third and final visitor for the day; a S.H.I.E.L.D officer approaches your bed and gauge her with caution. Considering the uniform, you guess she is a tactical officer, mindful of the handgun strapped to her thigh which you consider to be overkill for little ol' you. She announces your required presence and details nothing else besides that she will escort you to your destination. While thankful to be up and moving, dread courses through you as you're lead to your unspecified fate.

With trepidation, you approach the room with the escort in step behind you. Pausing at the doorway, you muster what courage and calm that's available, although minimal. Taking hold the door-handle, it is pulled open and into the room you step. It's but an average board room, minimalistic in desgn, only a large table and chairs circling around. You had formulated that Captain Roger's would be present but noting all else who are is a startling revelamement. Natasha Romanov - your access to her medical file one particular occasion, allowing you a glimpse to her civilian name - stands shoulder to shoulder with Rogers, eyes narrowed as she measures you; assassin through and through. Nick Fury, current director and co-founder - with the assistance of Dr. Selvig and Dr. Cho - of the recently established base of operations since the events concerning HYDRA and S.H.I.E.L.D's exposure. Fury is stern, clearly not happy with the turn of events - well that made the two of you. Dr. Selvig stands nearby, probably the only person expressing some positivity. You gape slightly seeing the intimidating form of Thor: Norse Thunderer, arms folded as he too, surveys the scene with frowning curiosity. The Maximoff’s - surprise, surprise - are also here, huddled together in the corner of the room, eyes intent on you - wearly you notice - yet you feel an instinctual pull towards them but
shrug of the feeling, blaming the recent series of illness to be cause. You distinguish Wanda's attire, too distracted the last time. Her clothes could be described as being influenced by the modern punk trend; worn boots with intentionally ripped, knee length, black socks; a black dress and red jacket adding colour; necklaces and rings adorning her fingers and neck; long, brunette hair, frames her face and heavy eye-lined eyes - penetrative. Pietro's attire has not changed except for an added jacket - his expression grim, weary yet not lacking their unforgettable intensity.

“All right, everyone is accounted for then,” Rogers voice draws your attention from your observations. “If everyone would take a seat. We might need it,” the ambiguous meaning foreboding. Dr. Selvig, Romanov, Fury, Rogers, the Maximoff's, and Thor, are seated in a semi-circle and yourself positioned at the foot of the table, separated from them. You suspect the positioning is intentional but for what purpose, you’re unsure. You can't help but feel like you're on trial, but punishable for crime or playing witness, it's uncertain. Regret blooms again, wishing that you hadn't shown Rogers the mysterious mark.

“I'll get to the point; at oh-seven-twenty hours this morning, both Officer (Y/L/N) and the Maximoff's simultaneously suffered from what has been described as a sudden and severe migraine, rendering (Y/L/N) unconscious and aborting the Maximoff's departure from base,” Rogers tone is all serious and he pauses, allowing the information to be comprehended before continuing. For yourself, it's a mixture of intrigue and confusion, the coincidence that at the same time - low and behold, the Maximoff's of all people - had endured the same attack.

“This, of course led to the question of how three strangers - although briefly acquainted yesterday - could be connected. In the past twenty-four hours, the Maximoff’s have exhibited strange behaviour and it has been brought to my attention that Officer (Y/L/N), has suffered from randomised aliments. For a healthy woman of her early twenties, that proves questionable. I approached her this morning while recovering in med, and she provided additional information that alluded to Pietro's involvement,” you want to shrink into your seat, feeling like a child having snitched on someone to the teacher.

“I approached Pietro regarding the gathered intelligence, but it was Wanda, who eventually illuminated to what was happening. She revealed that both herself and her brother,” and you frown at the details confirming both their involvement, “were too, suffering from similar ailments but of a lesser degree-”

“Spare me the drawn out details, Rogers. Can someone just tell me what is going on here,” Fury's exasperated interruption comes. You couldn't agree more, on the verge of nail biting due to the drawn out suspense.

“It's a delicate situation, sir-” Rogers efforts to mediate are interrupted.

“And none of your business!” comes the harsh retort of Pietro Maximoff. His eyes are ablaze, furious, and body intense. Wanda consoles her brother, laying a hand upon him.

“Brother,” she soothes, “We have discussed this...this is the best choice. For everyone. They will help,” her voice is barely audible, intent for only her brother to hear. He grits his teeth, clearly agitated, but with a forceful exhale, he calms, albeit slightly. Regarding Pietro with a disapproving look, Rogers observes him for a moment before continuing.

“There is no other way to explain this but: Pietro, Wanda, and Officer (Y/L/N)...are bonded,” he says seriously and silence follows the revealment. Fury shoots Rogers an irritated look which he counters by holding up his hand. “Wanda, could you elaborate, please,” prompting her involvement. She glaces quickly in your direction to find your attention fixated on her. Your thought process is too quick, even for you to make sense.
'A bond? The hell does that mean? Is this seriously the best intelligence gathering that S.H.I.E.L.D's has to offer?' rapid questions fire one after another and Wanda tilts her slightly, gauging your perplexed expression before speaking.

“As identified, it is a bond; singularly it not physical, molecular, lawful or emotional, but encompassing all forms of representations. It is a universal connection, comparable to the magnitudinal force that binds the planets; we are drawn and bound to the other in all manner of being,” Wanda's voice haunting yet vocabulary poetic. “In a simplistic sense, we are drawn to her and her to us, our bond ready to take form of whatever we so desire.” Silence follows her explanation, only the hum of the centralised air-conditioner can be heard, keeping the white noise at bay. You analyses Wanda's words but it’s a futile endeavour to make sense of what she said. Of all those present, it is surprising when from the brilliant mind, Dr. Selvig speaks, breaking the silence and thought process of all.

“What you speak of exceeds the parameters that science can explain,” Dr. Selvig replies, calm and calculative. “None the less, from what you describe, the most accurate term befitting such a connection, is a soulmate.”

“Yes. It is comparable to that,” Wanda acknowledges Dr. Selvig constructive addition. It's at that moment you exceed your threshold, the ridiculousness of the topic and the unbelieved calm manner of those before you incomprehensible.

"Are we seriously discussing the probability of being supernaturally connected to another person? And not just one person, but two? Those two?!” rudely pointing at the siblings. Your voice is a trembling calm, the proposition unfathomable. You stare from one person to next, expression incredulous, yet you specifically avoid the attention of Wanda and Pietro, whom you can feel eyeballing you. You note that in comparison to your first meeting, they have taken heed to not stare at you as often - nor as intensely - however the effort is strained. Pietro's eyes flickering back and forth too frequently; Wanda allowing side glances when she suspects your attention is elsewhere.

“She has a point,” Romanov comments, evidently skeptical as well.

“Just, hear this out,” and Rogers redirects his attention, “Thor, I asked you here today, hoping that you might bestow some enlightenment considering your mythological origins. We are limited to knowledge of our own world, perhaps from your universal experience, you might have something to share.” Thor, armour clad and all muscle, his form overshadows Wanda seated beside him. His expression is pensive and has spoken naught a word since the commencement of the meeting.

“I will say now that what knowledge I hold are but of stories spoken by the All-Mother – may she rest – nonetheless, I will speak of what I know. From the well that births the fate of gods, men and all manner of beings home to Yggradsil, from this source, the Norns weave urðr – destiny – our individual destinies and of the cosmos. While rare, there are those whom are fated to meet, the threads of urðr woven with meticulous care spanning years before their birth. On their meeting, it is said that an instantaneous binding takes place, a binding of mind, body and soul. Of Asgard, we have not a translatable word for the Migardian term, soulmate, for it does not exist. Such divinity can not be compressed into a singularity,” Thor's words are weighted and the illustration of the world beyond Earth is awe-inspiring.

“Thor, is there proof which might represent such a bond in a physical sense?” Rogers prompts and it's a daunting moment for you suspect what this is leading to. Thor is thoughtful once more, a moment of furrowed concentration before he speaks again.

“A common characteristic attributed to fated pairs is an exchange, commonly a mark, a symbol of their match to identify one to another and to those around,” at Thor's description, your gut sinks.
Hopelessly you stare at Rogers, awaiting his attention on you that you instinctively know will come.

“(Y/L/N), may you show us please,” and he signals at you. Swallowing nervously, you stand and draw back the sleeve revealing the mark and extend it for all to see. Besides the siblings and Rogers, everyone leans forward to study the mark. The compiling evidence of this 'bond' are starting to pave through your doubt, only to manifest apprehension and confusion.

“Wanda. Pietro,” and Rogers nods and signals at them, who too stand to draw back their sleeves to reveal a mark of similar likeliness. Imprinted on both their arms is: 'Excuse me.' You cringe, despite the situation, you would not wish your in-eloquent remark tattooed on anyone. Funny enough, you're surprised, considering everything, you're handling it quiet well; you're calm, and confused, but calm. But what did it all mean? How did this happen? Why you? Why them? Could it be undone? So far, the only people to have any insight were the Maximoff’s, particularly Wanda.

Intentionally, you turn your attention to her; fear, hope, weary, and confused, playing across your face. “I don't understand,” directing the statement at her, optimistic that she might hold more answers.

“We will help you to. Together,” Wanda's tone soft and sympathetic. You admit to yourself - just the barest hint of a whisper - that her words are comforting. A prickling sensation is felt on your right arm; pulling back the sleeve, what once was unmarked is now in-scripted, just as you had found your left. Wanda's first words to you. They too have observed the development, noting the appearance of: 'I don't understand', on their other arm.

Thor hums in interest, “First word binding. I have seen this before,” he notes more to himself. There is a mixture of fascination, awe and disbelief for those observing.

“Without the magic mumbo jumbo, can someone explain this to me in relative terms?” Fury irritably calls out. Rogers suppresses a sigh with great difficulty.

“The three of them are - by forces beyond our comprehension - bonded, sir, and it has proven already that they can't be separated, this morning’s incident an example. As Wanda has explained to me, physical and mental distress is consequential should it happen again,” Wanda nods in confirmation at Rogers summary.

Fury sighs - considering recent events, this is last thing he wants to deal with. “What would you propose then?”

“For the moment, I suggest accommodating to what is required. Officer (Y/L/N) quarters will be relocated to Avengers Tower where—”

“Wait, nobody has yet to discuss anything with me!” directing Rogers with an inscrutable look.

“The Maximoff’s are to reside at Avengers Tower considering their affiliation. You will live there also. It is but a temporary solution, Officer (Y/L/N),” begrudgingly, you nod in acceptance. If it meant not undergoing another of those mind splitting migraines again, then why argue. Rogers had said it was temporary and you trusted his word, having not been given a reason not to. Besides, Stark – no – Avengers Tower might prove interesting. But so many questions were left unanswered. As you had already thought previously; this was the beginning of something complicated...and apparently, beyond your control.

To be continued.

Chapter End Notes
Hello my veracious readers. Well, so much from being a 'crack' fic (it still is...me thinks). I swear, I started typing and the story developed further, and I NEEDED to explore or explain certain things. This would have been longer if I didn't rein myself back. Eh. I apologies if this is a fuck-fest of nothing making sense. I tried, but sometimes what I type just doesn't translate from my mind to literature form. Also, the final stage of the chapter is not entirely to my liking, so there is potential to be rewritten. Despite this being a 'reader insert', the character is OMC, there is no way around that as they develop through the chapters. The 'reader insert' factor - I guess - allows your own personalisation on the character.

Just a couple of notes:
- In the military forces: Army, Air Force and Navy; nurses automatically receive the title 'Officer', at least they do here.
- I dived into some research about Norse mythology and old Norse linguistics. There is no translated word for soulmate, however 'uror' is legit. Half of what Thor talked about is stemming from Norse mythology, the other half is bullshit created by myself to feed the story.

All in all, I hope you enjoyed this and its a decent size to keep you fed until the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Er mer gwash! I didn't intend on taking so long with this update, but, but some parts were so fickle to construct.

Chapter Notes

Sam Healy: So, you don't think there's someone out there you're meant to be with?

Galina "Red" Reznikov: Of course I do. Everybody has a soul mate. But they're usually on the other side of the bars, or the wall, or the planet from you. That's the way the universe works.

- Orange is the New Black

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“While adjustments will have to be implemented, this changes nothing. Wanda and Pietro will commence their training and accustom to their new life at Avengers Tower and Officer (Y/N) will continue her work as usual. I will collaborate with her clinical manager to form some synchrony between our schedules so that the three of you will be in some sort of proximity in order to avoid further incidence.” Rogers was methodical in his approach, not detail left uncalculated. The meeting was adjourned with orders for yourself and your significant others – you think sarcastically - to be examined by a specialised medical team. Relieved of duty – once again – you crave the loss of the work environment, wanting to be immersed in the natural hectic commotion that it was.

“My life, I swear” you mutter, tiffed at the latest development of your founded predicament. Yet your predicament had all manner of scientists and specialists, rubbing their hands at the opportunity to gather never before recorded data. Dr. Selvig had leapt, most gleefully, when offered the opportunity to collaborate with the medical team. For the second time that day, your medical condition was reviewed before progressing to the next form of assessment. Considering the possibility of having established a mental bond – one of three - it was easiest to confirm and asses. So the remainder of the day consisted of being subjected to a multitude of specialised neuroimaging tests in an effort to provide a literal picture of your current brain physiology. Dr. Selvig, Dr. Cho and a select few were chosen to be privy of the testing and the reasoning behind its necessity. You sigh, often, but considering your profession, you understood the necessity for the countless tests required.

The siblings are seated not far from you, wires trailing from the cap that encompasses their heads, leading to the machine, an electroencephalogram (EEG). Pietro had growled when the first scientist had approached him with the equipment in hand. With a disapproving look from yourself, he had relented and allowed them to continue with their work, though noticeably nervous as they fumbled with the equipment. With your own cap situated atop your head, you mull over the factors as revealed by the all-knowing Wanda.

A bond. Soulmates. Unfathomable concepts you didn’t believe existed - still didn’t believe existed -
yet supposedly you were a living example. Even the Almighty Thor, of a world unknown, more than a thousands years lived, had confirmed your fate. But fate was a personalised design, to be molded by your own actions. Yes, it was undeniable that the world around and others influenced the foundations of your perceived existence, but in the end, it was your own making. For someone - for something - to uproot your own beliefs, to rewrite reality as you knew, was frightening. No control, no choice, no freedom.

Whether it was physical or mental distress - or perhaps both - a headache is slowly building strength, dully throbbing away. You discard your philosophical ramblings, not wanting to aggravate it with further with a labyrinth of thoughts. You settle on masking your turmoil, an illusion of emotional stability and professionalism. While in the company of your colleagues, and the Maximoff’s, you refused to be perceived as nothing but dutiful, cooperative and just a sprinkle of verbal displeasure. ‘Conceal, don’t feel,’ you think with bitter humour. It was for another time, during the solitude of your personal company.

You are thankful for the distraction from your inner turmoil when Dr. Selvig and the science team swarm to review the data being displayed on several monitors; humming and chattering amongst themselves. Selvig prints a copy and removes himself from the group to inspect on his own, rubbing his chin in thoughtful contemplation. You want to know, need to know what insight he holds, anything that might explain all this. You call him over and he obliges and you proceed to ask him to detail his discovery.

“Dr. Selvig, can you tell me what you’ve found. I think it’s only right considering,” you propose, yet aim to suppress the eagerness and discomfit in your manner. Two sides of yourself are at odds: the curious nature that compels you to seek new knowledge to excel your abilities as a health professional, and the independent, stubborn, yet scared individual who loathed silent agents against their free-will. “While my knowledge of the brain is generalised, I should be able to make sense of whatever you have.” Dr. Selvig gauges you for a moment and nods, and he passes an EEG print out. The paper consists of lines, sporadic spiking and dipping, each line with its own characteristic.

“It’s quite fascinating. While the brain has distinct characteristic waves, each individual has their own personalised patterning, but from these readouts, it is evident that there is identical patterning between the three of you.” While Dr. Selvig explains with rapped enthusiasm, he has gained undivided attention of the Maximoff’s, trying to listen to his spiel. Wanda’s neutrally expressed inquisitiveness and Pietro’s brooding disregard. “As a consequence, there is identical fluctuations in the usual brain wave patterning. These exaggerated spikes and heightened arches might suggest mental and physical stress,” and Selvig points to the waves of interest. “I suspect that the bonds formation is a taxing experience for all aspects of your being. To cope with these sudden changes, it has consequently used your body as a conduit the relieve the stressors of the transformation. This has been exhibited by your various ailments; nausea, vertigo etc. During your brief separation this morning, the shear stress breached the bonds first level of exhaust, that being the physical plain and undoubtedly overflowed to put pressure on your mental bond. This is all theoretical of course.”

For only a theoretical explanation, it was logical to your mind yet presented more questions, like how the bond formed in the first place, why between three people, and why both siblings and not just one? Deciding on the later, you propose the question.

“Can you theorise why the three of us are bonded? Not just myself with Wanda or Pietro?” The question had been nagging at you since it’s revealment, and considering the genius of Selvig, you were hoping he could answer the question.

“Of all questions your situation presents, it’s probably the easiest to answer while still being
speculative. While all sibling relationships differ, each with their own intensities and emotional attachment; scientists - for hundreds of years - have studied the bond that exists between twins,” and again, he strokes his chin in contemplation.

“Twins?!” The question is exclaimed.

“Yes,” he says slowly, “Wanda and Pietro are fraternal twins. To my knowledge they are inseparable and their close sibling bond has no doubt influenced why they both were bonded to you and not just one of them.” The factor is surprising but it made sense, all the same. It explained quite a lot actually; their physical closeness, ability to calm each other as you had witnessed, and the ability through years of companionship to look to the each and express meaning and intention without words.

“I have the feeling this complicates things further,” you mutter to yourself. Selvig watches your sulking manner with some sympathy before excusing himself. The departing comment alerts you to ask one final question while you still have the chance.

“Before you go and if you don't mind me asking, isn't this beyond your own field of practice? I heard stories of you chasing dimensional rifts and the like. Isn't this a little mundane considering what you normally do?” The question is genuine for you didn't expect Selvig’s involvement considering his caliber in the realm of physics and this was a medical case after all.

“Besides Fury’s and Roger’s insistence, let's just say that personal experience has left me with mixed emotions regarding matters of the mind yet intrigued all the same,” he says with a strained smile. Rarely was it spoken of but speculative and suspicious comments regarding Selvig’s questionable involvement during the New York incident come to mind. “Biological science and astrophysics aren’t that far removed for science is the foundation of each.” And he leaves to once again engage with the other scientists and medical staff.

The next half hour drags for all that is expected on you is to sit and wait. You're starting to feel obsolete at this point. Nothing but a science experiment and your position here at S.H.I.E.L.D of no consequence. A voice draws you from your depressive thought, bossy and stern; it's Dr. Bamu, rounding on the scientists and other medical staff as she paves her way through them, bustling over to the Maximoff's whom she inspects and asks questions. Reviewing their medical charts, she gives them a nod of approval as a signal of her permission to leave.

You sit there, most impatiently for her to acknowledge you but all the while, happy to see a familiar face. The Maximoff's - despite Bamu's incessant shooing - have moved but only a couple metres. Side by side, they are reluctant to leave and stand there staring at you while frowning at Bamu; well Pietro frowns, Wanda stares. With an exaggerated and frustrated sigh, she leaves them and approaches you.

Before you manage a greeting, she address you with a stern tone, “My God, child. What have you gotten yourself mixed up in?!” Hands on her hips and eyes wides.

“Apparently I’m engaged in a polygamous relationship,” you say with forced humour.

“This is not a joking matter!” she scolds. “Oh all people, I should have expected you to find trouble in the most ridiculous of ways.”

“I don't go seeking trouble, you know,” you grumble. In response, Bamu tsks.

“I warn you now, your particular taste is troubling,” her voice low and even. The warning is clear, and you restrain yourself from looking in the Twins direction; nerves flitting about your stomach.
The urge to question her meaning is gnawing but you resist, this not being the appropriate time nor place; too many ears listening in.

“As of now, you are cleared for duty and will commence work tomorrow as normal. I can't withstand a moment more of Atkins' incessant nagging.” Had the circumstances been different, the comment would have had you grinning at the thought of the shenanigans Pat would be causing in your absence; instead, you nibble on your thumb nail. “You will wait here for an escort who will assist with your relocation the grandiose manor,” stating the ridiculous notion of your residential reassignment.

“You’re welcome to take my place,” you say sarcastically, and she huffs and give you a, ‘are you serious’ look. “Yea, I didn’t think so,” and sigh, headache gaining strength. “Can I grab some Paracetamol before I go?” Massaging your temple in a vain attempt to relieve the dull throb. She observes, reproachful but of the consequence of the situation, not of yourself. Without word, she leaves to return a moment later; two white tablets in a plastic medication cup and a disposable cup of water. Downing the two tablets, you ask her a question.

“Since you’re aware of the situation, will you be reviewing my case?” But already certain of her answer. Truthfully, you craved her to be your overseeing doctor.

“That would breach our professional boundary. While the Maximoff’s will be under my charge due to their Avenger status, Dr. Selvig and Dr. Cho will monitor yours. But why an Astrophysicist need be involved is beyond me,” she questions with unconcealed distaste. Selvig’s comment from before comes to mind and you relay a summarised version; minus the personal details of the comment.

“He might provide some insight considering the bond is apparently altering my brain waves. One of the foundations of astrophysics is the study of electromagnetism and brain waves are a formation of different electrical frequencies, so go figure.” The comment is offhanded but Bamu stares in genuine astonishment. Despite the surprising insight that your comment provides, it still doesn't convince her.

“Put some ice on that lip,” she curtly rebuttals and you roll your eyes. She leaves then to round up the overly enthusiastic scientists and you nibble and tongue your swollen lip, still tasting a faint cooper flavour while you observe.

Unbeknownst to you, the Maximoff's have a heated discussion in whispered tones. Wanda obviously wins out for Pietro stalks away in a huff. Passing by, he pauses, alerting yourself to his presence. You gauge each other, you brows raised in question and you watch the flicker of his eyes. The silent battle is short, your resolve steadfast and winning out, for Pietro breaks away and stalks from the room. Following his departure, you congratulate yourself on being bonded to a volatile individual and release a shaky breath. Of three instances of being in his company - including this one - he had only spoken to you once, seeming to prefer intense stares to communicate. Already you held a negative opinion of his person, based on his moody conduct and silent stares. It’s then a theory flowers into fruition; perhaps he blamed you, concluding you were the source of the situation. But of the sister, perhaps she was trying to mediate his anger on those occasion; convince him that none of it was your doing.

“He is concerned,” comes Wanda's unexpected answer to your silent questions. You hadn’t noticed her approach. She is intuitive, you note. While silent – much like her brother – they were different. Pietro was heated stares; pure emotions expressed in his silence, while Wanda; it is silent contemplation, her mind never ceasing to seek, compile and process all around her and gather intelligence.

“I find that hard to believe,” baffled at her comment, because it contradicted what you had just been reflecting.
“But he does; we both do,” she insists.

“That still doesn’t explain anything,” the rebuttal exasperated. Wanda stands there, motionless, but in your short time that you’ve had to observe the woman, already you have picked up the clues to her immersed thoughtful nature, yet mixed with an impression of disconcerting scrutiny.

Wanda steps forward, closing the gap between your seated placement and her standing position. She locks her eyes with yours, a mixture of intensities. Then her intention is elsewhere, tilting her head as seen in the nature of animals, reacting to a strange sound, signalling curiosity and enraptured attention. It isn’t until the moment of the physical contact that you heed her gesture to touch your bottom lip. You flinch, but only jerking your head back in surprise; her hand remaining stationary but millimetres from your lips. Again she looks to you, as if seeking permission to again continue. Stupefied by her behaviour, you neither refuse nor condone the act, yet you aren't repelled by the action. With no verbal or physical cue to cease, Wanda, again with feather like gentleness, touches your bottom lip, fingertips brushing the swollen split. Bewildered by the notion, Wanda’s brow quirks, the reason - unknown.

Without breaking neither physical nor visual contact, Wanda states, “A consequence of this morning.” To reply would break Wanda's fascinated rapture - if that is what she expected of you. With caution, you manage a whispered reply, minimising the movement of your mouth.

“During our migraine.” And you miss the fact that you referred to the incident as a collective experience. Her undivided attention bursts forth a nervous flutter; it had been so long since you had experienced the feeling. The proximity of your persons allows you to study her in greater detail. She is at least three inches shorter than you; eyeliner old and smudged yet emphasising the hazel, doe-like eyes; petite lips parted in inquisitive study of your own. It's then that you ask yourself: if it had been her brother, Pietro, to act as Wanda was, would you allow it? Immediately you answer the question knowing that his brooding, tense form would not be welcomed so close. Wanda’s conduct and manner exhibited no threat yet, you knew that was an ignorant thought, for she was granted the title, ‘Avenger’, for a reason.

She was pretty, no doubt, but it wasn't quite an apt description, falling short by more than a few standards. Her appeal - and you admitted she was appealing, a quiet thought to yourself - encompassed more than physical appearance; you were drawn, like a magnet, to her entire being. The same for Pietro but that was disconcerting, considering his brash behaviour and fierce, unwarranted attention.

'A hazardous allure,’ you settle on the description although still not fully satisfied. You sense - how you're not sure - but she was deadly and S.H.I.E.L.D knew that. Better to own the weapon than your enemies. But was she a danger to those around her?

“We would never hurt you,” her voice breaking your internal dialog. The promise, while meant with good intention, is naive and should never be made, for unseeable circumstance and forces beyond human control could easily upturn it.

“No one can promise that,” you whisper, and smile sadly at her. “Why do you care?”

“Because you are -”

“Officer (Y/L/N)?” Wanda’s sentence is interrupted. An Agent, tall and stiff, hands clasped in-front of them, await your reply.

“Ah, yea?” you spare only a glance, again focusing your attention on Wanda, wanting to hint at her to continue. She glares at the Agent, irritation clear at the interruption.
“I will assist you to gather your belongings. Captain Rogers has allowed thirty minutes before departure,” even their tone is stiff. You continue to watch Wanda but she doesn’t attempt to continue and you feel despondent.

With wan, you stand and adjust your uniform, drawing Wanda’s attention from the Agent. The moment is lost, to be reclaimed later, you’re doubtful, and so, you turn to the Agent, nod your head and depart, leaving Wanda staring after your absence.

Packing what little possession you had, the task was hurried despite the impending dread of leaving base to an unfamiliar home.

Home. No, it was merely temporary. Home was where the heart resides, so the idiom goes, yet your heart belonged nowhere. If you had to choose somewhere, it would be the residence you were currently vacating. S.H.I.E.L.D base was the closest thing to home and would have been happy to continuing to call it such for many years to come. But no, that happy perception had been abruptly squashed.

With the assistance of your silent escort, the few boxes of possessions are stacked within a Quinjet and you take a seat, securing yourself with the safety belts. You wait and brood, thinking of the evening ahead. You feel a tug, difficult to described. As if an invisible thread, just one of many, interwoven into the matter of your brain, and one single thread is pulled with subtlety. You blink, curiosity spiking at the sensation. Following the pull, you turn your attention to the hatch, open and view to the hangar bay in which you are stationed. Approaching from afar, you identify the forms of Steve Rogers, leading the procession, Natasha Romanov, and the Maximoff’s falling in behind. It makes sense that the Veteran Avengers would escort them to Avengers Tower; being fellow residents after all. You watch as Wanda and Pietro approach, shoulder to shoulder.

Rogers offers a nod as he passes you, Romanov, an indifferent glance. The Twins take their seat opposite yourself, and you note, that for the first time, they actually look nervous. You feel compelled to know why and shyly observe Wanda. Your attention is immediately meet with her own and quickly you look away in embarrassment, recalling the intimate moment you shared not long before.

Captain Rogers occupies the passenger seat in the cockpit with Agent Romanov at the helm. The engines roar, and the slow ascend if felt as the Quinjet rocks with a controlled sway at the hands of Romanov. From your limited view out the cockpits reinforced glass, it can be determined that the aircraft is hovering only a few meters above ground before the heightened rumble as the rocket engines signal propulsion. The Quinjet is flown fast, the skyward reaching buildings visible on approach. The journey is quicker than anticipated, the recognisable skyscraper that is Avenger's Tower – as you have seen on TV – nearing fast. Romanov pulls up, the engines, again, roaring with the back-force of the thruster. The single platform at Avengers Tower is circled, the Quinjet hovering in position before descending. With a thud, the landing is secure and Romanov can be heard talking into the headpiece, confirming their destination and safe arrival. The rear ramp is lowered and a gust of wind whips the hair of everyone on board. As you fumble to unlock the safety belt, everyone else exits and wait on the platform. There, you notice how precariously positioned the Quinjet is on the platform, little room would allow for anything bigger. The plummeting view of the city below has you scoot to the middle of the walkway, not wanting to chance a gust of wind to overbalance you to a most unfortunate death, and despite the company of four superheros, not even they could prevent such a mishap.
Rogers walks ahead and all follow behind, yourself trailing last. The glass doors open into a lavish, multi-leveled foyer; entertainment lounges, a well stocked bar, and what looked to be workbenches, all manner of equipment littered about.

“Jarvis?” Rogers calls out into the empty air.

"Yes, Captain Rogers," a British voice responds, yet you can’t locate from where.

“Let Stark know we’re here. Also, where has he organised the required guest rooms?”

“Very well, sir. Please proceed to floor twenty-six,” the voice is all politeness. Rogers turns back to yourself and the Twins, not surprised by the questioning looks.

“That’s Jarvis, Stark’s A.I home computing system. He will assist you with anything you need.” He leads the party to the elevator. At floor twenty-six, the doors open into another foyer - not as grand as before - but the glass ceiling to floor windows allow for a spectacular view of the surrounding city.

“Which rooms, Jarvis?” Rogers asks again.

“Miss Wanda and Mr Pietro Maximoff will reside at the far end rooms on your left; Miss (Y/L/N), the second door on your right,” he concludes. Rogers looks between the three of you.

“Alright, I’ll leave you guys to it. I don’t know when Stark will make his appearance but I’ll find him and have a word. As I said, ask Jarvis - or any of us - should you need something. I’m not sure when you will receive a tour but in time,” he says. “Y/N,” and his use of your first name is surprising, “do you need a hand with...” and he gestures to the boxes.

“Oh! Ah, no. I’ll be fine,” you reply with flustered haste.

“You sure?” he questions with that classic charm. You nod in reassurance.

“OK then,” and he turns his attention to the Maximoff’s. “We will be leaving at 0700hrs tomorrow morning as Y/N has work and we have little choice but to have you guys leave with her,” he states. They only blink in acknowledgment but Rogers has quickly grown used to their lack of reactivity and knows they understand. Rogers and Romanov - who has been standing by silent and observant - leave via the elevator. Their departure prompts you to grab a box and head towards your ‘new room’, leaving the Maximoff’s to their own devices.

No more than an hour later, the nagging growls of your stomach prove hard to ignore, so you relent and ask Jarvis for directions to the nearest kitchen - as you suspect there would be more than one. You settle on a cup of instant noodles, not wanting to prolong your stay in the kitchen and to make a hasty retreat back to the security of your bedroom. Appetite sated and enjoying the spicy aroma of the room, you lie upon the bed contemplating what awaited tomorrow. A knock on your door penetrates your thought process. Stiffening, you lie in silence, trying to catch a hint of sound beyond the door. Again, there was another knock, and again, you didn’t answer, for who it was, you knew it was one of two people - you could feel it. There is a flash of the intimate moment between Wanda and yourself, and embarrassment flushes across your body. This afternoon, you had been only too keen to continue the conversation that had been interrupted but now, whether is was stubbornness, or fear, - perhaps both - you don’t greet the awaiting visitor. And so, the silence that followed the second knock was the only answer they were to receive.

The opportunity had been there, and just like your bedroom door, it just had to be opened...but tonight it would remain closed.
The following five days – yes, why wouldn’t you count the days of this supposed ‘temporary’ arrangement – proves to be disorienting, frustrating, and taxing. Work hadn’t been consistent; only provided a day in advance of what to expect for the following, and it was only one of two choices: either work or mope about your room. The next day – since the move – was met with a pedantic Pat, who demonstrated fierce concern through incessant questioning. Thankfully, all inquires was deterred when Bamu overheard the verbal probing, she classified the matter as a need to know basis and future questions would be met with reprimand. Pat reluctantly dropped the matter. With her questioning glances etching into your back, you threw yourself into every task, craving the distraction from your predicament and the loneliness that waited at the cessation of your shift.

That afternoon, back at Avengers Tower, you settled on exploring the tower since you weren’t going to hold your breath waiting for the tour that would never happen. You consider it a mere distraction because as you had been told, your stay was to only be temporary, right? Your activities - much to your dismay - earned the attention of the Twins, who follow you, quite keenly. The first hint of their presence came in the form much like your experience as they had approached the Quinjet, a subtle tug. Slowly, the persistent tug - both of mind and body - gained intensity. Turning in the direction of the attention seeking sensation, you gauge the length of a corridor, and you can feel them, only a few metres from you. Why did they follow? That you couldn’t answer. At first you can't make sense of why they would, forming all sort of excuse for the behaviour, but as it continues that lack of understanding, morphs into irritation. And so, room by room; floor by floor, you are tracked. No visual confirmation, only the invisible leash that incessantly pulls at you.

The next couple of days followed the same: work accompanied with heated questioning looks from staff - from everyone. Quickly it was becoming common knowledge that some ‘grunt’ was now residing at Avengers Tower and the attention was no less subtle there, for you continued to be stalked by two Sokovian wolves. The attention was suffocating which only caused you to become further irritated, bordering on angry, and consequently forcing you to become reclusive. There was no word from Rogers, Selvig, or Cho, no information or explanation, no indication to the length of time you would be required to remain here. All there was, was uncertainty.

The second night came, and like the night before, you intend to find a quick and easy meal, your intention to not linger too long. Leaving your room and inbound for the kitchen, you're thankful to notice the lack of tug (that begrudgingly you were becoming accustomed to) as you navigate from level to level. The kitchen doors are ahead but you stop short when a prickle flits across the back of your neck. The distant clang of cutlery against china and the scrape of a chair is the second confirmation that others occupy your intended destination. Silence follows at the sudden cessation of movement from all three persons. You know that the Twins can sense you, how could they not if you could sense them. The kitchen door is all that separates yourselves. Heart noticeably thumping in your chest you formulate a scenario. You could walk in there, make your food, extend a courteous greeting. If they wanted to converse, would that be so bad? But fear snakes it’s way through your gut and you back-step, one, two, before turning around and retreating. You can’t understand why, refuse understand. All you know is: you didn’t want to have that conversation with them. As if talking to them would cement your predestined fate.

It had become a habit to lock yourself in the confinement of your bedroom - sanctuary/prison - when circumstance didn't require you to leave. On the third night in your new, unfamiliar bedroom – which you suspected was what a five star hotel room would resemble – anger coils in your gut as you reflect on recent events. It was no different from any other night. It was routine for you to reflect on the past, present and future, your personalised lullaby. The thoughts and reflection lulling you to sleep. But tonight, negative emotions and unsettling thoughts obstruct the calm wave of sleep.
“She’s not ready, brother.” The voice of Wanda is soft and hushed. Startled, you sit up and scan the room, searching for the source; yet in the gloom of night, there is none but yourself. Grumbling and just a touch frightened, you cocoon the bed sheets around yourself, a protective barrier for when you fall to unconsciousness. However, it’s a long time coming as you lay in the dark, begging the call of sleep, but consciously aware that it’s not only yourself whom sleep evades.

The next day, you purposefully work longer hours, prolonging the conclusion of your shift and the awaiting dread. It was a passive aggressive move on your part, still trying to maintain a professional image at work despite the turmoil within. It takes a personal messenger on Rogers behalf to usher you from the medical division and to the hangar bay. The other passengers are seated but Rogers remained on the platform, arm crossed as he waits your arrival.

“Bamu didn’t request overtime.” But he knows it was of your own accord.

“Committed to the cause,” you respond sourly, and proceed up the ramp with purposeful stomp in your step. With little dignity, you fall to your seat and strap yourself in, rough in the handling of the straps. Refusing to meet the Twins inquisitive stares fixated on you, begging the question and answer to why your pissed off, you turn your head away, lean your head back and eyes closed during the journey back. Let them look all they like, you think.

You forfeit dinner, too angry, too tired, to make the effort. All the negative emotions had taken it’s toll. You could feel it, emotionally and physically and something deeper, something deeper at your core. Were you so wrong to feel the way you did? Didn’t you have the right? You honestly don’t know anymore.

Although despondent, while on base and at work, you kept your ears fixed to catch information on the mystery duo. Anything substantial that might assist in understanding them better - for actually approaching them and asking out right was overstepping your perceived boundary. The three of you may be bonded - although ambiguously so - it didn’t mean you had to start interacting with each other. Fate would have it that a delicious snippet of information found it’s way into the medical division one day. It’s source was a tactical officer who, while receiving medical aid, questioned out-loud why Stark and the Maximoff’s would reside in such close proximity, considering their abhorrent distaste for one another that they had unfortunately witnessed. The answers they received in return were a mixture of, ‘Like we care.’ and ‘Duh, their Avengers.’, but it was all the information you needed and the first spark of life you had felt in days.

Sunday comes, and Sunday is a free day. Lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, you wish that work awaited your attention, instead of white noise of mocking solitude. You detested the thought of another moment spent locked away in that bedroom, or the ‘hair on end’ sensation of knowing you were being watched and followed. Hadn’t your ‘back the fuck off’ persona been enough of an indication?

It’s then that you decide to utilise the new found knowledge. It’s routine as usual, dressing, bathroom and then food. While preparing your meal, you feel the usual tug - they are incoming - and it’s an indication to cram your food and make for the retreat of your new found safe haven - or so you hope. With the informative assistance of Jarvis, you make your way to one of the upper levels that had been outfitted as - one of many - of Stark’s workshops. Where Stark was, the Twins made sure to avoid, and where Stark was, you would go.
Emerging from the elevator and opening the security that wasn't providing security, you marvel at the sight of the room. Equipment littered countless work-benches, monitors projecting stats and blueprints of unknown constructs, a soft hum vibrated throughout the room.

“I don't recall requesting medical aid,” The voice startles you, and you whip around to meet the source. You hadn't seen the form of Tony Stark, hunched over at a far-away desk. His comment left no doubt that he knew who you were.

"I, ah, was just exploring," awkward in your reply.

“Ah ha. Yea, Jarvis told me to expect you, hence why the door was unlocked,” you blush, excuse crumbling in your mouth. You're mortified, but settle on coming clean...at least ninety percent.

“Ok, yes, I’m guilty of asking for directions,” fumbling with the explanation. "Was taking the initiative to take the grand tour since I doubted that was coming anytime soon," you say with more confidence.

"Yea, I don't do the tour thing. Why smoother natural inquisitiveness. It's worked for me," examining an object in-hand. Somehow you doubt advanced weaponry was a result of 'natural inquisitiveness'. Shifting your weight, you gauge if your intrusion has expired and consider leaving but reluctantly. Before the thought can be implemented into action, Stark halts you.

“So, a nurse huh?” Tony quips, concentration still intent on his examination.

“Um yea,” hesitant in your reply.

“Are you a glutton for punishment?” and you frown at the implication of Stark’s question.

“There are good and bad days, same as anything else. Though, I have pointy things are my disposal,” and Stark barks out laughter and you smile; conversation breaker officially broken. It had been near six months ago since the event in question; Bamu was conducting a post-operative check up on Stark, having chosen to have the miniaturised arc-reactor removed, along the shrapnel that threatened his life. By shear luck, you have been Bamu’s accompanying nurse, all nerves at the prospect at meeting the Tony Stark. But those feelings were quickly deflated when subjected to Stark’s notorious, flirtatious behaviour. With a deadpanned expression and a flash of needle, Stark had surprisingly cease further comments.

“I knew I recognised you from somewhere. I actually thought you have stuck me with that needle. Don’t think Bamu would have minded either,” he considers. “So...true what Captain Spangled told me?” he asks casually while fiddling with tools. You're ninety percent sure what he's referring to, but you want to hear him say it.

“Didn't take you for one to 'beat around the bush', Mr. Stark,” voice challenging. He spares a brief glance at you, smirking only to return to his work.

“You can drop the formalities, you’re not at work, and you know what I’m talking about. You and the Adam's Family Twinlings, that better?” You have to admit his has a talent for stupidly, funny nicknames. Your silent while contemplating your answer; in a metaphorical sense, you would compare the bond that now existed between yourselves as being similar to that of a mortgage loan with ridiculously high interest rates, and you had been neglected to be informed of the term length. You settle of a simpler form of confirmation.

"Unfortunately it is.”

“And how's that working out for you? Is the accommodation to your liking? I would have organised
for your bedrooms to be, ya know, side by side, but that seemed a bit scandalous and this is a reputable house, I'll have you know.” And you can't suppress the burst of laughter, shielding your mouth behind a hand. “So at separate ends of the hallway was the next best option. Should prove a challenge. Didn't want to make it too easy on you kids now,” all humour and friendliness in his jesting.

“It's far from that!” you can't help exclaim despite being well aware that Stark was baiting for an exact reaction.

“Now, now, what happens behind closed doors is none of my business,” he ushers while moving about and continuing his tweaking and fiddling on unknown objects. You relent and allow the comment to slide as for the first time in too long, you’re at ease. Stark provided - in but a couple of minutes - releif from the emotional chaos for the past few days and it most welcomed.

“Do you much about...” and Stark gestures around the room at his organised chaos and you shake your head in response.

"Um, the human body is my only mechanical project," you inform with smile.

“I weep for the future,” he mutters. “Well if you plan on cramping my space, at least I can have you doing something. Come here,” he encourages. Walking over to stand by his side, you notice the height difference, being more significant; the Iron Man suit portraying the illusion of a taller man within.

“OK, do you know what this is?” holding an object in front of you. Again, you shake your head in response, and with a defeated sigh, Stark commences a spiel on that particular object, it's uses and molecular construction, his enthusiasm contagious. Stark sets you a task, socket wrench in hand, tightening the bolts on some colossal construction that remains unidentified. Its silent work but calming; the silence only broken when Stark issues new instructions when you complete a task. At the commencement of each new one, he never fails to detail what you're to do, what tools you'll be using and their utilities. The work continues, the length of time that passes, a mystery and irrelevant.

Focused on the work at hand, wielding two metal pieces together – despite voicing the fact you had never used a wielder before but Stark causally discards the concern simply saying, “First time for everything and what better way than hands on.” Jokingly you to note that you could add wielder to your resume.

“Time to refuel,” he declares and promptly you set down your tools and personal protective equipment and walk over to where Stark is pouring some drinks. You note the golden hue of the liquid and wrinkle your nose, suspecting the potent alcoholic beverage you're being handed. “I hope you like a biting edge,” he says before downing the glass in one. He smacks his lips in satisfaction, inspecting the now empty glass before looking to you, gaze questioning. Withholding a grimace, whiskey wasn't your beverage of choice, finding the taste unrelentless on your taste buds, and having never understood the exalted praise from enthusiasts.

'Down in one,' you think, then chuck the glass back, opening your throat to minimise contact with your mouth. The sensation is warming as it passes down your oesophagus to pool in your stomach like a mound of embers. You swirl your tongue about your mouth.

“Next time, just give me battery acid,” you shudder at having unsuccessfully avoided tasting the drink.

"Amateur,” he smirks, shaking his head. “The more you have, the easier it gets,”and he offers the bottle, having already refilled his glass. It doesn't require a thought on your part, feeling the slow
spread of warmth from the first glass and basking in the feeling. Pushing your glass over in response, you observe as the amber liquid fills one quarter of the glass, the prospect enticing. With a clink, simultaneously both drinks are downed with enthusiasm. Maybe this is what you had been missing these past few days. You’re glad to be seated, feeling the heat of your flushed cheeks and just slightly woozy. Stark, you observe, displays no change, decades of tolerance seated beside you.

“Sir?” sounds the British accent of Jarvis. “I have someone seeking entry to the workshop. Pietro Maximoff.” At this you look to Stark, surprised.

“Um, ok, sure Jarvis. Let the little spit fire in,” and he meets your questioning gaze. “This should be interesting,” he remarks to himself, removing from the stool.

“I didn’t think he would come here,” note to yourself, confused as you had counted on the dislike for Stark to be a determent, discouraging them from following you.

“Affection is one third logic, one third persistence, and one third irrationality,” answering your confusion. You frown at the comment, only to have your attention drawn to the door when it opens to reveal Pietro. His body rigid as he surveys the scene before him, his eyes snapping between Stark and yourself, and then to the opened bottle of whiskey on the bench top. His already-present frown deepens.

“Welcome to my humble abode!” Stark declares, opening out his arms in a mock gesture. “I have but two rules upon entry: children keep their hands to themselves and my word is law. You got that, mop-top?” he finishes. Pietro reels in a sneer at the blatant tease, instead he ignores Stark and focuses his attention on you.

“What are you doing here?” he directs the question to you.

“I was enjoying myself,” your reply blunt.

“You have been here more than an hour and a half, have you not enjoyed yourself enough?” And you hear the restrained frustration in his voice.

“Do you make it a habit to time all my activities? Or are you perfecting you stalking techniques first?” You allow your building frustration accumulated in the past week to be expressed, and Pietro visibly flinches, looking away for all but a brief moment.

“Rule number three: lover's quarrels are banned,”

“The commentary isn’t helping,” sparing a look at Stark who stands diagonal from your seated position. “I’m going to need another drink at this rate,” you remark.

“With Romeo here, I don’t know why you haven’t started already,” he mutters but doesn’t aim to hide the comment. “Help yourself,” and Stark reaches over to pour more whiskey but it halted as Pietro takes a threatening step forward.

“Don’t,” the steeled mono word bites. It draws the attention of both yourself and Stark. The audacity of the comment would’ve had you bristling with irritation if it weren’t for startling licks of hot anger that lashes against you. It’s a ricochet of Pietro's turbulent, emotional state, and intensifying with each passing second. You feel the waning restrain, like an elastic band reaching its peak before snapping back with stinging severity and you sense one more miniscule stretch will end it.

“Yea, since you didn't clarify who that was directed at, I'm going to speak for the both of us: Don't you tell us what to do,” Stark’s voice has lost what joking feel it had, now hardened and he stares down his opponent. “You got that?” Gut instinct is warning that this is a volatile situation and it
needs to be diffused and quickly. Standing, you break your wary focus on Pietro and turn your attention to Stark.

“Ah, Tony-” you start, voice cautioning but stopped by the flash of rage felt from Pietro at your casual address.

“Y/N!” Pietro growls with waver ing restrain. Your eyes snap back to look at him only to have Stark’s voice thunder in your ear.

“Hey!” he barks, “back off.” The comment causes Pietro to take another step forward, his presence imitating a coiled spring.

“I've got this,” directing Stark with the comment. Turning your attention to Pietro, you aim to reason with him, trying desperately to drop the condescending tone. “Pietro-” and it's the first time you have addressed him by name, the momentary surprise fluttering across his face, softening his hardened features and you too, pause at the realisation. “-I don’t how you presume to have the authority to tell me what to do, so let me make this clear: you don’t.” The completion of the sentence fixates his face back to the creased brows and upturned smile. “I may go where I want, and visit who I want. You don't see me dictating your life or Wanda's, and I only expect you to extend the same courtesy. Our arrangement hold little influence in regards to what each of us may do,” you finish and gauge his reaction. He drops his heated gaze to stare at the floor, his face a flurry of rapidly changing emotions too quick for you to grasp and identify or feel.

You think – arrogantly - that you have talked some sense into the man, putting an end to his childish behaviour. That is until a wave of anguish floors you, stumbling backwards at the pure intensity. Stark’s hands steady you and you hear him utter a sound of concern. Clutching your chest, a weighted, crushing feeling of pure emotional, physical and mental pain has you gasping for breath.

“But him,” comes the strained response. Lifting your head to look at Pietro, he sporadically vibrates, different areas of his body targeted by the action. “Why him?!” You can only stare wide-eyed, unaware by his meaning. “You have us, yet you turn to Him!” The turmoil of emotions is disorientating all senses and you hold your forehead, feeling the start of another migraine.

“OK, this is enough,” Stark states impatiently. Grabbing your shoulders, you allow him to move you aside to be seated on the stool once again. “I will han-” But he doesn't finish. A crack is heard. Your stomach lurches at the sensation of expectantly falling. A thud sounds, hard from the floor. Instinct overrides all actions, your body twisting to grab a hold of the bench behind you. The act, while clumsy, prevents you from falling to the floor. The bench top supports your upper body, snug under your arms as they are splayed out across the table, hands grasping at empty air. While your knees have buckled beneath you in the floor, your half suspended. Dazed you try to register what happened and look to the sound of the noises you heard. Stark is halfway across the room, rolling to his stomach and pushing himself upwards. You then notice that Pietro stands where Stark once stood but his attention intent of the man across the room.

You realise then that Pietro had sent Stark flying with a shove, the force of the action, causing you to topple from the seat. With a grunt, you haul yourself to your feet and warily gauge the scene. Stark has since gotten to his feet and righting his clothes.

“Well that was the first and final strike. Disrespect towards your elders? That an automatic and permanent ban, Maximoff” he retorts with icy casualty.

“You overstep your bounds, Stark,” Pietro replies.

“Funny, because you did so first and that would make you the hypocrite,” Stark retorts. He marches
towards Pietro and visibly you see his body tense, preparing for the incoming hostility the Stark in emitting. With the gap between them closing, you watch as Pietro plants his feet and you know this is going to end badly. With desperate haste, you lunge towards Pietro.

“Stop!” The urgency palpable. Pietro is distracted, focusing his attention on you and it's the second that Stark needs to get the upper hand - literally. The fist lands against Pietro jaw, sending him staggering backwards and grasping at the area of impact. While briefly Stark smirks in triumph, its short lived at he realises now he's open to a counter and considering his lack of attire, that being the Iron Man suit, it's going to hurt a damn lot, and he knows it. Pietro is quick to recover from the shock and sneers at Stark. Before the blink of an eye, Pietro has grabbed Stark and hurled him across -one of many- workbenches, items and equipment is sent crashing to the floor, along with Stark. Pietro marches around the side of bench, intent of his physical retribution.

You’re cemented to the floor, watching the scene with fright. This is a battle between hero’s - hero being the operative word during this moment for neither were being heroic – and you had no chance against the likes of an Avenger, let alone two. You had no influence, no skill, no powers that could prevent the two from beating each other stupid. Yet, you're worried for Stark; Pietro's abilities granted him the upper hand and without his suit, Stark was a meat punching bag with an emotional, testosterone driven inhuman gunning to make him pay. Stark, winded from impact, is dragged from the floor, hands fisted into his shirt.

"Is that all you have, old man?” Pietro sneers, his nose an inch from Starks. Stupidly, it's now that you're suspecting that whatever exists between the Maximoff's and Tony Stark, is more significant that you originally thought. It went deeper, remembering the anguish that Pietro radiated before.

“No one ever taught you how to properly goad your enemies, hmm?” and Stark flashes his notorious arrogant smile. Pietro growls in furious anger, hurling Stark back against the bench, his back impacting and earning a painful gasp. It's enough to shock from your paralysation, and you run to meet the altercation.

“Jesus Christ, Pietro, stop!”

"You care for him?!” he accuses, eyes wild as he directs his attention on you.

“What?! No! I mean, yes but only that I don't want to see him hurt,” you stammer. Again, Pietro's redirected attention allows Stark to plant an elbow and another punch to the face, loosening the grip on his shirt. “Stark, stop!” you yell at him but he doesn't heed or acknowledge. Pietro is now sporting a lesion to his cheek, which he casually swipes with the back of his hand. Lightening fast, Stark is grabbed again, a punched sending him toppling to the floor. Blood visibly marks the knuckles of Pietro’s hand and you wince at the imaginable damage that Stark will now sport. From the beginning, the outcome was in Pietro’s favour and there is no hope to prevent it’s bloody conclusion.

With the startling addition of another Avenger, Steve Rogers intervenes, apprehending Pietro with a swift grab from behind, securing his arms in a lock.

“Get hold of yourself, Maximoff!” he growls. Pietro struggles in the hold, fighting to free his arms and Rogers tightens his grip, earning a grunt of pain from Pietro.

Tony staggers to his feet, wiping his chin as he stares down Pietro, the act smearing blood across his chin, mixing with the stubble. “Ah Cap, you killed the mood. And here we were just starting to have fun,” Stark jests between pants. Rogers shoves Pietro aside who rights himself by rolling his shoulder whilst staring down Rogers.

“Knock it off, Stark!” Rogers barks. He walks between the two, his body a barrier should they try to
continue their fighting and looks between the two sides, eyes critical and unyielding. “Whatever the hell this was...it ends now. You hear me?” Rogers is aware that despite a baiting comment, he won't have any problem with Stark, his problem lies with Pietro who he fixates with a stern expression.

“You got that, Pietro?” he questions, who huffs and looks away. With one last look, analysing the bruised forms of two members of Earth's - supposedly - mighty team, he orders them away, “Go. Get yourselves cleaned up. Any repeat of this event will be met with consequence.” Pietro shoots Rogers and Stark a glowering look, purposely avoiding your concerned attention before he's gone from the room. You fight between concern and irritation for the rash youth.

Stark tries to disguise a limp and walks past Rogers on his way out. “Spoilsport,” he mutters. You turn to follow Stark's retreating form when your intention is halted.

“Y/L/N. If you would give me a moment of your time,” while the comment itself is courteous, the tone leaves no room to objection and reluctantly, you turn to submit your attention to a very pissed off Steve Rogers. He stands there in the heart of the clutter that the items make of the floor, jaw clenched and arms crossed.

“What the hell happened?!” Steve bellows, and you wince at it's severity.

“You saw for yourself,” intentionally telling a half truth.

“That I saw but what I'm interested in is the catalyst. Something tells me you're not innocent in the matter.” You gape at the accusation.

“Why are you trying to pin this on me?!” you exclaim.

“You are Pietro's only reason to have set foot near Tony,” he explains, “Something tells me that Tony was your scapegoat – for whatever reason – and your plan backfired.” Guilt swells and you look away, unable to maintain eye contact. You hadn't perceived your intention of seeking Stark's company to have been so transparent. With reluctance, you admit your intention, Rogers and yourself knew he was right.

“I had heard the Maximoff's and Stark didn't get along, so I thought maybe, maybe they would leave me alone, but I didn't want this,” your confession quiet. The weighted silence that follows is brief.

“That proves you didn't do your research, Officer Y/L/N.” The use of your title and surname has you cringe at the disapproval interlacing the statement. “If you had, you would know that what exists between the Maximoff's and Stark is more than simple dislike for one another. Hasn't your profession taught you the significance of gathering data?” At this, you meet his eyes, questioning the meaning but meeting a hard expression.

“This is on you,” and you wince at the harshness of the directed blame. “You will fix this, and I don't care how, but you will. We're supposed to be a team yet I have teammates throwing punches on the side lines. What you ignorantly fail to understand is that what now exists between the three of you - Wanda, Pietro and yourself – this isn't about you anymore. You think this is any easier for them? At least they are trying, willing to breach the gap, yet you turn them away and reject every olive branch of trying to better the situation. I have sources confirming such.” It’s reminds you, acutely so, like the parental tactic of: I’m not angry, I’m just...disappointed. And so far, it was working. “I’m not trying to disregard your own feelings, but for the moment, this requires a compromise.” Rogers words are the truth that you had so blindly ignored. It was all true. The Maximoff’s had remained at arm's length, allowing you the choice of approaching them but serving a reminder that they were there and ready. They have probably felt the indifference you hold towards them.
“You will go to them and apologies..and for a moment, consider what they're going through.” You nod glumly. "There will be penance for you actions, but what, has yet to be decided.” You feel guilty for your tactless use of Stark and lack of awareness for the Maximoff's disposition you still remained ignorant to. Yet, you're not not entirely guilty, not as Rogers would wan - expects. What you wanted still mattered but you would right the situation. You would do right by them.

Chapter End Notes

Aye, guys. Apologies for the belated update. It won't happen for C4 because half of it typed already, yay! The reason for that is that I actually shaved five pages from this chapter. It would have been WAY too long and taken even longer to be uploaded. So, yea. This has been my least favourite chapter to write, it was hard and I'm not satisfied with it. Personally, I feel I left a lot of things unexplained, especially the emotions and thought process of the Reader/OFC. There is so much I want to elaborate on but it will come later when I visit to edit further. If you were getting the impression that the Reader/OFC was being unreasonable and bitchy, that's what I intended. I want them to be flawed and not entirely likeable in the installment. I promise, in the next, that is when things will start rolling. I won't allude to what, but..yea. More things will be explained which will set the foundations for the remainder of the fic. If there are any questions, let me know in the comments.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Foundations of the future are paved with good intentions.

Chapter Notes

"Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors when there were only walls." - Joseph Campell

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As if an invisible force encourages your quickened feet, you flee the workshop that played witness to the incident just transpired. You’re feeling ashamed and shaken, ‘And rightly so,’ you think bitterly. A confrontation hadn’t been your intention – the complete opposite in fact, yet that is where the root of the problem had flowered. Emotional compromise, from all involved. You were guilty of avoiding problems instead of confronting them. Instead, they bubbled and manifested into resentment and ignorant irritation. From what those negative feelings feed off were the altering changes of your shackled arrangement.

The ailments, being the grandeur opening act; the unsightly tattoos that now permanently marked both arms; The Maximoff’s behaviour; their voices whispered in the darkened hours of night, rendering less-than favourable accumulated hours of sleep; the fluctuations of your own moods; the supposed temporary re-homing; that incessant pull that you wish you could physically yank in retaliation; the backlash of emotion (but that was only a recent addition as exampled by Pietro’s display this morning).

While the Maximoff’s, too, suffered with these annoyances, they weren’t entirely innocent in the matter. Pietro’s possessive behaviour – as it could be described after an analysis of the event – was ridiculous but confusing. Most of his behaviour was unbecoming; his frowned expressions, snarky attitude and fierce eyes. No wonder you preferred Wanda of the two. Yet despite his flaws – their flaws - your selfish intentions and provoking remarks had instigated a reaction from Pietro, fraying at his turbulent emotions, waning restraint and resulting in his own emotional compromise. To make matters worse, Rogers had unveiled the severity that was a secret history between the Maximoff’s and Tony Stark that you had unknowingly, yet naively, used to your advantage, and thus ignited the commotion down stairs. That had been it’s own fuck fest of ricocheting emotions.

You needed – craved - a source of exhaust, a task to release the built tension coursing through your body. Jarvis is asked for the nearest gym, preferably deserted, if that was possible in this god-forsaken place, and with haste, you make for it's solitude. The following hours, you work yourself to exhaustion; alternating between running the treadmill, weights and other activities of a grueling workout. It has been over a week since you had attempted physical exercise, which you aimed to maintain a regular routine considering the physical requirements expected of all S.H.I.E.L.D personnel. The strain is brutal but serving as both a distraction and punishment you think you so rightly deserve. You reflect on your interactions - and lack of - with the Maximoff’s and cringe at
what an asshole you’ve been. Yes, the situation - soulmates - was a shitty deal but subject to interpretation. But how did they interpret it?

Panting hard, you sit with your head bowed, clothes soaked with sweat, feeling a drop trickle as it travels to hang on the tip of your nose. You would love to say that at this point you’re too tired to feel anything, but it was completely the opposite. The emotional conflict easily more severe than it was before. For all but a brief moment, you are distracted; that prominent pull that you have all but accustomed to, causing you look up quickly to behold the figure standing but a meter from you.

Your breath hitches, the sudden fright stalling your outburst. Cautiously, you gauge the silent, imposing form of Wanda Maximoff, observing for a hint of hostility. You know, just know, that Wanda is already privy to what transpired, in no doubt that Pietro shared his experience with his sister. And now you’re to be subjected to the verbal backlash from the protective sibling - and you hope it’s only verbal.

“I know of the conflict concerning, Pietro,” her voice soft and eerie. Well that confirmed it. Now was your chance: accuse her of her brother’s brash behaviour, demand why they had been following you this past week, vent your anger as you had with Pietro. But the anger and irritation withers away as you stare at her, leaving all but your guilt. All that you muster is pathetic in comparison of what could have been said, but it’s contrasts true to your state.

“I’m sorry,” you say, a tremor hinted in your voice. “I...I didn't mean...” Unable to complete the sentence and looking away, guilt emanating from you. Wanda looks on at your ashamed manner, neither angry or hostile as she knows you expect of her.

“While the actions of all were unfavorable, had you been privy to particular information, I know you would not had conducted yourself in the manner you did.” It was a subtle slap on the wrist, but in a most genteel way; her accented voice, hypnotic.

“You can’t know that,” you mutter glumly, wallowing in self pity. Still you refuse to meet her eye, but at heart, you know Wanda speaks the truth. If only you had known.

“But I do. At heart, you are a good person, the well-being of others a treasured gift; at times, at the expense of your own.” The insightful comment drawing your attention back to her. “It is rarely found in others.” A smile graces her lips, delicate in nature. It is but one of few expressions - beside her regular neutral one - that she has displayed in the short time you have known her. You are in awe, closing your mouth when you realise your fish impersonation. There was just something about her.

“I think it long overdue that we discuss what remains unsaid.” You stiffen at the implication of her meaning, forebode due to the direction of the conversation. “However...you may ask the questions, and I will answer to the best of my ability.” You remain silent, contemplating the offer she has extended. The offer had always been there, Wanda and Pietro had been patient, hands extended in offer of an explanation and provided support through what they were experiencing...in their weird, stalker-ish way. Yet, through ignorance, fear and denial of the circumstances, you had refused their gesture.

You lick your lips, the heated breath of your vigorous exercise having parched them but also in nervousness. Considering Wanda's offer, you come to the conclusion that you had to face the future – however brief – that existed between yourselves. Instead of voicing one of many questions that had formed since the bonded moment, you intended to rectify your involvement in a certain incident, but first, you required information to know what exactly you had done.

“What is the history between yourselves and Tony Stark?” you ask with caution. Wanda makes no
immediate action to answer, instead considering the question and how she will explain – or so you think she is doing.

“It is not complex yet nor is it a simple matter. It was, it is, a life altering moment that has shaped who Pietro and I have come to be. But, this explanation is for Pietro to share, should he want to. You must ask him. Only then might you mend the fissure that parts you both,” Wanda responds. No persistent questioning would sway her to reveal their personal history. You can't help but cringe at the thought of approaching Pietro and asking him, not expecting the calm or reasonable reply that Wanda had returned. You nod in understanding and make the task a priority to fulfill. So, that left your sole question to be asked and it stirs excitement and dread within you.

“Ok,” you start, prompting the next question, “Thor...Thor spoke of bonds, like our own, to be predestined, but he said nothing of the immortals to be the ones who crafted them. There has to be an origin, the cause for why it was created,” your voice is steady despite the underlining nerves. There was relief in verbalising the theory that you have formed during the past week. “Do you know how the bond was created?”

As you voiced your question, you watch as the once neutral but calculative expression of Wanda’s face morphs. It is subtle but not unnoticed by yourself as you watch her intently for a sign that may prelude the answer to your question. The forming crease of her brows, widening eyes, and the bare part of her lips. Fear. She is fearful and tragically, what hope you held, clutched to for dear life, withers away. Because despite all that has happened, you trusted her, just a bare hint for the strange woman. Instinctively you know what she will say will not to be your liking.

Wanda gathers herself, no physical movement, it was of the mind, preparing herself of what she knows is to come. Your dread is emanating from your being and she feels it; wave after wave, both desperately seeking your answer and yet repelling the secret untold.

“Yes.” Her reply is firm and stare unwavering. Silence follows as you look on, heart pounding most violently. She won't elaborate, not without your insistence.

Again, you lick your lips. You open your mouth with a question prepped on the tip of your tongue, but pause. No. 'What was it?', was what you were going to ask but your gut – o' reliable – tells you otherwise. That was not the right question.

“Who was it?” your voice trembles. That brief display of fear has since been wiped from her face, now steeled and without emotion.

“It would be best if I showed you,” she says in her approach. You make to stand but she extends a hand, halting your movement. “I advise you to remain seated.” And her extended hand draws close to your face, fingers twitching in a spasmodic dance and you watch with trepidation.

“Wha-”

“Please, allow me to give you the answer you deserve.”

As it had happened before, she gauges you for an answer yet you neither refuse nor accept. Just sitting there in stunned, wary silence. But inside, whirling about your mind is the repetitive, 'Just tell me!', and Wanda hears it loud and clear. Again, her fingers dance and a red, glittering swirl is conjured, the beauty reflecting upon your face. Enraptured by the sight, Wanda weaves her spell and with the flick of a finger, all is dark.

It's hard to describe what happens next...next...it was timeless. There is a nudge, another presence
occupies your mind and although frightened by the experience, you know it's Wanda. Then an image appears about you, no, no mere picture but a true visual of an environment, as if you were there seeing it yourself.

A city. Snow capped mountains. A bordering forest of pine trees.

'I recognise this place."

Home.

It was a different sight to behold without a crater hollowing its center. The sensation is odd, floating above the capital city of Sokovia. It is a brief but tranquil moment until the instantaneous drop, the ground colliding towards you. There is no abrupt stop, no pain, only a new sight to observe; a ground level preview of the city.

You stand among the opposition of the rioters, on the front line of the armed force who oppose them, weapons at a ready. Looking about, nobody sees you, just an invisible by-stander in someone's memory. Wanda's memory. The collective shouting of the rioters forms an imposing roar of a deranged animal. Snarling. Starved. Intimidating. Their banners are punched firmly towards the sky, intent unmistakable in every action. Swiftly, you flicker a searching gaze from left to right, scanning for who you know awaits to be found in the crowd. And you see them: not much younger than they were now. Pushing and shoving, sandwiched between the other rioters.

Pietro was almost unrecognisable; earthy brown, disheveled hair, before his now signature white. Beside him is Wanda, her face twisted in furious anger, jeering at the imposing opposition. Much changed to her commonplace composed manner.

Despite the incoherent ramble and chanting, the intent of the civilians is made abundantly clear. The American flag lays burning within no-mans land; a fabric sown mannequin adorned with the world recognised Captain America outfit too, burns, a barrier between the opposing sides. Their message is unmistakable. But why would the advocate against the Avengers? The question is added to the growing mound before living memory changes like the click of a remote.

Your mind lurches, a most unsettling feeling. You are walking yet not, for it's not your body. It's dusk, the traveled street dilapidated; spray painted graffiti, crumbling walls, littered rubbish. However, Pietro walking beside you – beside Wanda – walks with ease, unfazed by the state of the area, comfortable familiarity on his home turf. They continue in silence for a length of time, reaching a desolate intersection. You – Wanda - continues forward but with only a few steps, she pauses, noticing the stalled footsteps of her brothers. She address him, observing the frowned expression as he gazes down the street.

"We will go this way," he says, and turns away from Wanda's forward path, choosing the street to his left.

"You ignore what we discussed?" Wanda asks, pressing Pietro for his avoidance.

Pietro tsks, "You speak of closure, but there is but one way we will find peace, and it's not there."

"But it is a reminder-"

"We are the reminder! You and I are the example of what we have lost and that is what fuels me, what fuels you, sister." Wanda doesn't reply, only gauges him for a moment before crossing the short distance between them and reaches for his hand. Together, they walk, discarding Wanda's original direction in favour of Pietro's.
“What have you lost?”

The lurching sensation of your mind being displaced is short, thankfully. However, when the feeling ceases, it's dark and you can't see anything. At first you think that perhaps another memory is being stalled but it's when the shiver of cold wrack Wanda's body, you know then that the memory is in play. It's odd, that within her memory, that you too, feel the physical sensations should you possess your own body in these moments. As you well know, all sensation are calculated and translated by the brain, even without a physical body, the neuro-receptors can still be stimulated to provide the illusion. This memory is odd and displaced. Somehow you are in three places at once: the third party witnessing, the second sharing Wanda's personal experience, and the superficial but tangible reception of Pietro's. You can smell stagnant water, the damp odor of moister polluting the air.

“Wanda?” Pietro whispers, voice hoarse from the strain of screaming.

“Yes, Pietro?” Wanda answers back. They lie facing each other on the cold cement floor, hands clasping the others in desperate consolidation. Their bodies are wrought with exhaustion and pain, every micro fiber of their being having suffered from the hours of experimentation. You can feel it, that pain recreated in your own mind.

“Will this have been worth it?” he asks. There is fear in his voice, like that of a child, seeking comfort and reassurance from their parent. The room is dark and silent besides the audible dripping of water for an unknown source. Wanda can only just perceive the silhouette of Pietro's form, the minor shivering of his body vibrating through their connected hands. One might suspect that the chill were effecting his body, any other time Wanda would assume that. However, it is not the cold; Pietro is undergoing a change, they both are, but what kind, she is uncertain and it terrifies her.

With desperation, anger, and vigilante justice fueling their naive acceptance of Struckers offer; the prospect of obtaining a power to rid their country of oppression had dominated their every thought and action. Lying there, Wanda realises, gritting her teeth through her own torment, that yes, they wanted to save each other, to exist with only each other, never parted – happy.

Parents?

Pietro and Wanda, at the source of all their turmoil, just wanted to save each other, to exist with only each other, never parted – happy.

As would any parental figure, Wanda lies. Her lie, honey sweet, “In time, yes it will. In time.” For time is the unknown factor dominating their world. How much longer will they suffer like this? How much longer will the experimentation continue? How much longer until they posses the power to save each other?

“Will there only ever be us?” he croaks, and Wanda frowns at the question, her confusion blinded by the darkness. “Without the love of a parent, friend, or lover. Will we only ever find this in ourselves? Will that be enough?” Wanda considers his words. If that were to be, her brothers love and her love for him, would sustain each other through life. But there would be that unfulfillment; were they not good enough for someone else?

Wanda, with what remains of her will, hope and concentration, wishes and projects into the unknown, to a force she knows does not exist - but might exist for this purpose - that someone might be out there, somewhere, waiting for them. Someone who would tell them it's ok. Someone whose love was unconditional. That would love Pietro, see beneath his shielding brash and arrogant nature, and discover a person self-sacrificing, loyal and burning with all desires that he wished to share with another. For herself, Wanda only wants her brother to be happy, through his happiness she was
happy. But just a flicker of a thought, yes, the idea of another love, who would love her as they would her brother, is a tempting and desirable thought.

“Perhaps, brother. If I could will it into existence, I would. But we will be enough...for now,” she consoles, but her words true.

From the side lines, you watch the Twins in action, their powers on full display for you to observe.

They are training, practicing the use of their abilities while cliche, white garbed scientists rapidly note details, watching the progression of their biological weapons.

To one side, Pietro demonstrates with inhuman speed, gaining stamina and increased acceleration. Wanda displays her telekinetic abilities; her fingers a masterful commander of strings as they magically levitate knives in the air, twirling with dangerous fluidity. The scientists soon grow tired of mere child's play, ceasing her efforts. Someone barks an order and a nervous participant enter the room, under guard. They are shoved, roughly, causing them to stumble forward nearing her. She is prompted, a scientist asking – no – commanding her to invade their mind. The ability, this power is still new to Wanda, having only accidentally discovered it recently. They had been thrilled (HYDRA, that is) that she possessed fear manipulation and greedily they had her practice on live subjects.

They stand there quivering, fearful of her.

'They know not of fear,' she thinks briefly, no sympathy for the subject, for their continued efforts were for the greater good. Sacrifices were consequential. She raises her hands before them, the signature red lights warping around her fingers. She toys with the light show, gauging the enraptured attention of her onlookers. Strucker, who stands beside you, watches on from the side lines, observing his miracle at work. With one final moment of prolonged play, Wanda's mind plunges forward.

The individuals mind is defenseless and ready for the taking, like an intruder before an unlocked door. Before she can make first contact, her intentions are halted. Both a feeling and sound, something calls to her, a whisper incoherent. Her presence remains before the doorway to subjects mind but with another lull of the beckoning call, she turns away, her focus and attention redirected. She reaches out into the void, following the trace and leaving the only familiar plain that she knew – that being human consciousnesses.

The further she reaches out, the further into uncertainty she proceeds and before its too late, she realises she being sucked in. Wanda scrambles, frantic to ground herself again to the mind of the person she know stands but an arms length from her, but the physical and mental plain are two, completely different fields. But this, this was something else. No longer was she in the realm of the mind, of cognition. It was indescribable. Realities, other minds of human and unknown origins, flash by her, swirling past in a confusing roller-coaster. It's all to fast and astronomical for her to grasp, yet she does just that. She reaches out in desperation to grab hold of something, to prevent her continued directionless journey into the unknown. She explodes forth to behold a magnificent sight; all manner of colours, light and more.

The universe – but one of many – surrounds her in its purest form and she can't believe all that she sees and feels. Witnessed before her – but around her – resemble a grand form: it's root at the base, collide together to form a trunk that extends upward to branch up and away, forming an overshadowing umbrella. The answers to all generated questions before her. Yet, despite the magnitude of this revelation, she does nothing but bask in the sensation. Doorways, paths and possibilities surround her, more than mathematics can number, but there it is again, the whisper that
she had followed. She follows, her consciousness floats to the center of the tree-like formation and it's there that the anonymous call now hums, thrives before her. It pulsates with heat and blinding light, beckoning her and she does so willingly. Wanda tentatively extends out towards it, should she have a physical body at this time, it would be her hand. She's in awe and she closes the gap and but lightly touches the source of her navigator. Wanda is thrown not a millisecond after the contact, an explosion as she is sent hurtling backwards, the universe and all realities accelerating away from her, the void of darkness encompassing, and BAM!

Wanda is one with her body, breathing heavily upon the floor. The familiar palpation of the minds within the training room confirm she is back and the confronting presence of Pietro at her side. She can discern that he asks after her well-being but his speech is rapid, still trying to master the control of his abilities. She hushes him and says she is alright. The tsks and enthused chattering of the scientist can be heard. Someone address Wanda, asking her what she experienced but why she didn't manipulate the subjects mind as was asked of her. Wanda, still reeling from her cosmic adventure wants nothing more than the solitude of her room to think of what transpired. She musters a withering look as she stares down her onlookers. Despite her vulnerable position on the floor, Wanda succeeds for some grow nervous and flinch away. Of everyone, none have the courage to ask again for Wanda's failed attempt, save for Strucker, who steps forward from his concealed side-lined position.

“What excuse have you, Wanda?” He is not frightened of her; to be frightened would lose him all form of control, and The Twins required an adamantium clasp.

“I grew distracted.” Is all she responds. Strucker observes her, knowing that the younger Twin hides something from him. No matter. In due time, he would know and The Twins would continue to grow more powerful.

“Perhaps you have overexerted yourself for today. Return to your rooms.” And swiftly he swivels on one foot and makes for the exit.

From the corner of the bedroom - prison - the scene plays.

Pietro pesters Wanda, wanting to know what happened, because of the both of them, Wanda didn't make mistakes. She remains quiet for the longest time, eyes closed, brows knotted in concentration. Pietro paces back and forth about their shared room, the act restrained for walking at 'normal speeds' is agonisingly slow for him, he has come to realise. With unsettling concern, his attention strays from Wanda for no more than a few seconds at a time, calculating her expression and disposition. Slowly though, as time passes, her expression softens to bliss contentment. When her eyes open at last, Pietro freezes, ceasing all movement as he stares at her. She meets his stare, hearing the concern projected loudly from his mind.

“There is hope for us, brother,” she says with whispered trepidation, as if the very words would undo all that await them. And Wanda proceeds to inform Pietro of her experience, of carelessly passing beyond the realm of human consciousness, following the beckoning call of a source unknown. Breaching universal barriers to behold all that existed and more, more than possible human comprehension. But there, cradled by the universe she knew, all possibilities and powers within reach for her to master and mold, the call was unrelenting, drawing her attention again. It wanted her, wanted to be found. With just a caresses of her mind, all had been revealed, the monumental and world altering impact of the information rescinding her presence, throwing her back to her mortal body. The recollection is lost to Pietro, as Wanda had thought, beyond human comprehension and her words not doing the experience justice. Despite having been the one who experienced it, even she is at a loss of how to describe it.
“Wanda, what you speak makes no sense,” Pietro says. Still he is worried her his sister, her ramblings of interdimensional travel quite unusual of her.

“I was shown something, Pietro. Something...miraculous,” she grabs his hands as she stares intently at him, wide-eyed.

“There are no such things as miracles,” he replies solemnly. Her expression turns sad at his words. This world had treated him – treated them – unfairly, like so many others. Kind intent, hope, and miracles no longer exist within their world.

“Are we not an example?” she questions, diverted from the original topic.

“We are freaks. A science experiment.” His voice and face harden. “But I would not change this. It is what we wanted, but it is no miracle, Wanda.”

“Neither would I, brother,” she replies. Wanda does not disregard Pietro feelings, for they were once her own, but now, now things had shifted, and shifted for the better – she hopes. “Neither would I,” she repeats, “but hear me,” her voice insistent.

“I heard you,” he sighs, “you received a premonition?” And Wanda freezes, for it was an precise description.

“Yes, yes it was.”

“You fail to tell me what this miraculous premonition is?”

“For you keep interrupting me, brother.” Chastising him with a look. “Would you believe me if I were to tell you that, somewhere upon this Earth, exists someone; someone who would be all that we need and yearn for. Can you not feel it?” And she presses a hand against his chest, emphasising her point. “Have you not felt it? As if the laws of the world have been rewritten to allow subtle redirection?”

Wanda gauges Pietro response, watching as his skepticism transforms into that which she has rarely seen herself. He is staring across the room, nothing but the cemented four-walled boundary for view, but Pietro's concentration is focused on the startling revelation of Wanda's news. His mind races with thought and recollections, minuscule pieces forming to complete the puzzle. He returns his attention to his sister, face furrowed with shock but Wanda reads his belief.

“But how?” he utters. Wanda shakes her head, still in her own state of disbelief.

“I...” And she remembers. A second yet lasting longer than time itself, she had felt Pietro's pain, her sorrow, his silent cry, her unrelenting desire to guarantee their happiness. A wish, a single thought, made a reality. She fixates Pietro with her wide eyes, expression apologetic. “I did not..I had no control-” she chokes, and Pietro cups her face, the gesture comforting. He hushes and leans his forehead against hers, a shaky sigh escaping her parted lips.

“Why apologies...for a miracle,” he consoles.

The following months, HYDRA aims to perfect the abilities of The Twins, as they have now been dubbed, and they too, focus on honing their skills. Pietro pushes his limits, becoming increasingly faster and improving his endurance, for such accelerated speeds is naturally taxing on his body. They title him: Quicksilver. The signature silvery wisps which are all that his enemies will see as they fall.

Wanda, since her experience into the beyond, has unveiled more abilities besides telekinesis and fear
manipulation. No premonition has visited her since but discovered her talent for telepathy and energy projection...and her powers continue to grow in strength. She is coded: Scarlet Witch. Like her brother, named for the otherworldly talents she possesses and the red light when she casts.

They haven't forgotten Wanda's discovery, now an additional motive and priority; to better the world so that they may coexist with their special other and find them when they had succeeded in doing such. When they find themselves alone, cuddled upon the shared bed, they whisper to each other fantastical thoughts of whom they have yet to meet. Who Wanda had bound to, for they can feel it, a hollowed section of themselves that remained blank and gaping, and how they craved to fill it and secure who was theirs.

Soon comes the birth of Ultron and his promise to the Maximoff's; to aid them in ridding the world of the Avengers and fulfilling their revenge against Tony Stark and all that America represents. The Avengers are defeated in battle but the war not won; the Hulk aided in that. Thereafter, Ultron prioritizes the goal of constructing an artificial body with the forced assistance of a scientist who had been specifically chosen for the task. It is not long before Ultron's conscience is uploaded into his new body, The Vision of himself.

Wanda knows fear, her own and that of her enemies, but she does not understand why, before the creation of Ultron, that fear plagues her, radiating from the body within the casket. She lays a hand upon the confined body and the experience is all too familiar. Her mind is torn from her body, suspended and whirling about her is their future; Earth's future and it's inhabitants. Ultron's ulterior motive: the annihilation of the human race, and Sokovia, their home, would be the detonation button. Wanda is one again and she throws herself backwards, repelled by the cocooned being and it's not so secrete, secrets. It's not what they wanted, what Wanda and Pietro wanted.

They sought justice, for the injustice they had endured.

They sought peace, for all they knew was war.

They sought love, for they had been deprived so young.

They sought revenge, for revenge was only fitting.

But they didn't want this. The death of their country men, the death of all life. And so they fled but with the intention of stopping Ultron, even if it meant siding with those they had originally opposed. For a world where no life breathed, was a love lost. Their unidentified other, who waited them. Pietro and Wanda, would fight, with everything they had, to retain, desperately so, for a chance of happiness.

The war was fought and worn were it's Avengers. Pietro, believed to be a casualty of Ultron's warped ideology, had fallen, and so did Wanda; crashing to her knees in a soul splitting scream as her powers obliterated all about her in agonising sorrow. As her fury rained down on her enemies, Wanda disregarded her position besides the drop button, and took the battle to Ultron, who had personalised this far beyond what she could have imagined.

And so Ultron fell, like she believed her brother to have done, and so did the air-born land mass of Novi Grad. She had resolved she too would follow her brother but The Vision, opposite of all that Ultron had envisioned, swooped her from her plummeting demise.

Aboard the civilian transporter, Wanda was ushered to the body of her brother, where he lay on the ground beside the wounded, Clint Barton. Taking to her brothers side, she pressed her face against his chest in sorrow, her silent grieving only decipherable by the shaking of her body and white
knuckled hands. She hears Clint mention how Pietro sacrificed his life for himself and a boy. Said her brother was brave and selfless in that moment. Despite Clint's effort to detail the heroics of her brothers actions, it didn't change the undeniable fact. Her brother was dead.

Or so they thought.

Wanda's sobbing ceases, her face tear stained. She presses her ear to Pietro's chest, yet nothing she hears. It's what she felt. With waning energy, she concentrates, focusing all attention on the body of her fallen half. Her mind reaches out, scanning his perceived, lifeless form. And there it is. A flicker, oh so small. She releases a choked gasp. There is life, her brother lives! But barely. His abilities are kick-starting a frantic healing process, his body having shut down in order to commence the formidable task. A laugh interlaced with a sob escapes her mouth and she caresses Pietro's face, brushing the tangled fringe from his forehead.

Pietro, now conscience and healing, is seen once aboard the herculaneum aircraft, hovering above what remains of Novi Grad. But despite the property damage, casualties were minimal. The Avengers had succeeded. Medical staff see to his injuries which miraculously – to them that is – are near healed. But scabbing and tenderised skin a reminder of the near fatal bullet wounds that had decorated his body. Wanda too, is seen, though her injuries minor, but scraps and bruising.

Wanda and Pietro sit beside one another, the brief tragedy of believed loss of one another still as fresh and tenderised as Pietro's injuries. The emotional distraught would take time to heal. However, something has captured their attention. They had felt it, Wanda had as they had drawn near to the S.H.I.E.L.D aircraft known as the Helicarrier. The pull, gravity redefined. On his waking, Pietro too, was quick to notice the change. They sat, hands clashed, staring in the direction of the pull. They were aboard the aircraft. The one whom Wanda envisioned, the one whom would complete their lives.

Hours later, the Twins are on the verge of becoming hysterical. Pietro paces with heated steps, intermittently dashing about the waiting room in unrestrained frustration. Wanda, who is more aware than Pietro or the unidentified other, and the prolonged event is straining her mental capacity. She grows lethargic with each passing hour, becoming almost sickly. When finally they are ushered into an examination room under the escort of Steve Rogers and armed guard. Wanda is too tired to protest and as such, Pietro makes up for her lack of response, scowling at the masked guard and demanding why security is required. The stress of the situation has taken it's toll on Pietro as well. Becoming more brash and rude than he normally would be. Despite his manner, Steve Rogers calmly but with commanding authority, explains the necessity considering that they had, until very recently, been vigilantes on the opposing side whom had wanted human extinction. On S.H.I.E.L.D's part, it was a precaution that couldn't be wavered.

With a huff and another scowl, Pietro has relented, choosing his sisters side whose strength evaporated. With passing minutes as they awaited the doctor who could conduct an examination of them both, Wanda turns frantic. She clutches at her head, the building pain that pierces her mental capacity.

“They are here, Pietro!” her whisper hushed and agonised. Pietro fixates her with undivided attention and encompasses her hands in his. “So close, so close. How long we have waited,” Wanda chants through gritted teeth. Her breath comes in shaky gasps, eye clenched. Pietro maneuvers her to the bed in the room, aware that the stress of the situation is taxing on her body.

“Hush, sister,” Pietro consoles, “Soon now. I feel them too.” Steve watches the exchange with frowning worry. While they have quietened, no longer bestowing himself and the guard with withering looks, Steve does not like the progression of this new development. He hears the door
open and into the room steps Dr. Bamu whom he nods a greeting. She approaches him, stern as usual and eyes the individuals who occupy the bed.

“Rogers,” she greets, “what is the situation?” And she nods to the hushed Sokovian conversation between the Maximoff's whom she identified via having seen their photos in the intelligence file.

“You'll have your hands full with that one,” nodding to Pietro. Rogers and Bamu eye the pair critically while Pietro continues to calm Wanda.

“Is this something I should be concerned about?” Bamu's questions in relation to the exhibited distressing behaviour of the Sokovian twins.

“From my experience...caution would be the most tactful approach.” His attention focused on them. “Rest assure, that's why I'm here;” he claims, but his voice lacking reassurance, tired from battle.

Bamu huffs, “That does little for comfort.” She eyes the guard stationed at the door disapprovingly. “You and 'Shoot First', are but catalysts in this concoction.” Rogers doesn't respond to the comment, fixated. Oh how little they knew of the incoming catalyst.

The door sounds and the rattling of a trolley drowns out the murmured conversation of Wanda and Peitro. The trolley pauses and all is silent. They can feel it, so clear and powerful now, the thrumming and undeniable pull. It pulses in their veins, unmistakable of who has set foot into the room.

“Um, Dr.Bamu, is everything alright?”

Their breathing hitches. That sweet but commanding sound. They stare at each other, processing what is happening, then Wanda hears it; the need of her brother. She hastens to to grab him, stall his brash thought. True to his codename, he is too quick. Pietro is before them, but allowing her first glimpse of the preson, of the woman. She can hear their internal dialog, feel their palpable fear due Pietro’s intimidating behaviour. Truly, his actions were innocent but fueled with emotion and need.

She hears the hitch of breath, “Ours, you are ours.”

Oh, brother. It wasn't the meeting they had intended. Wanda remains upon the bed, the sickness fading. The bond was near complete.

“Excuse me?!”

The separation is painful, a gasp escaping your mouth. It takes a few seconds to ground yourself back to reality – your reality. All awareness of time is distorted; had it been minutes, hours or seconds? Pressing a hand to your head to where a dull throb lulls, you're thankful to be sitting, Wanda's suggestion having not been unfounded.

Wanda.

That singular word sparks an incalculable process of puzzling together all that had been revealed to you, to narrow down to a singular but monumental fact.

“It was you!” you accuse through gritted teeth. Once the ache has subsided, you divert all focus on Wanda, pinning her in-place with a glare. “Why didn't you tell me from the beginning?” Wanda is the embodiment of 'calm and collected' despite your fierce accusation. She has since stepped back, allowing space between you.
“This transition has been hard enough for you. I knew that acceptance would not come easy so my intention was to minimise the stress of the experience. It was unnecessary to burden you with that knowledge until you were ready and still now I think it premature,” Wanda explains.

“Burden?!” you hiss in retaliation. “The burden of knowing that all this, has been your doing all along?” You rise to your feet, steady and grounded in preparation for a verbal confrontation.

“Your well-being was our sole concern-” Wanda tries to mediate but is interrupted.

“Don't try to sugar coat your actions!” Your heart rate has once again accelerated, breathing quicken with angry puffs warming your lips. Wanda delays a reply, calculating the best response to resolve her actions.

“Please, (Y/N), allow me to explain.” Your name strikes an invisible cord, the sound and manner in which Wanda says it is unnerving, and it only serves to rile you more.

“Why?” you exclaim, “why should I trust you when you haven't trusted me with the truth from the beginning?” How could you trust her or believe her? She had successfully shattered what regard you had held.

“I have withheld the truth from you, that I admit, but what I have shown you, that is no lie. Those chosen memories have been orchestrated to create a mere glimpse of the foreshadowing events that have consequently resulted in our union.” You scoff at her continued effort to minimise the damage done.

“You expect me to believe that?”

“But you do.” Anger prickles in response to the audacity of the comment and she gauges your response critically. Before you can retaliate, Wanda continues. “My memories are the foundations from what you accuse me - and rightly so - yet does that not confirm that you see truth in them?”

Game set and match.

The concluding comment to the trivial argument is a slap to the face, earning a wide-eye expression. You bite down on a lashing retort, knowing it to be a pointless and childish to further your argument when you knew her to be right, and how you hated that. She always seemed to know. As the adult that you are, Wanda's undeniable truth is acknowledged by adverting your attention from her to stare begrudgingly at a random inanimate object.

We will help you too. Together.

What bullshit.

No matter the truth of your feelings that Wanda had acutely stated, it didn't absolve her poor decision for it hadn't been her's to make. The authenticity of her shared memories wasn't what concerned you, merely used as a conduit for what truly mattered. She had been dishonest. Yes, you believed what she had shown – despite your trivial argument – but at the root of it all, Wanda had lost your trust, and that's was mattered most.

“Your distrust is not unfounded, that I acknowledge. In time, I would hope I can earn it again.” A huff of suppressed, bitter laughter sounds in the silenced room. Yea, that would be a long time coming...or never.

So where did this now leave things? Quickly, you seek another argumentative topic that might sway something in your favour, might make Wanda see reason and logic. You reflect on the memories so
willingly shared, sorting through the turmoil, angst and devastation. It seems rude, to be privy to such private and personal possessions and you would gladly have them erased, if it didn't require Wanda's intervention. Yet buried beneath all those chaotic events and desperation, was the moment that ignited your intertwining futures.

At the root of your turmoils was this bond, and Wanda it's creator. Wanda has only been guilty of withholding information but it's creation beyond her control – as she so claimed. Despite how much you want to, you couldn't hold that against her. That, however, eludes to the question of how much power the Sokovian woman possessed? That reality could be so easily and unconsciously woven to her will and desires. It's a terrifying thought that you dare not voice...not now at least.

The foreboding thought is cast side to be reconsidered later. You muster an illusion of self control, betraying nothing of the daunting thought, for at this stage, you know, deep down that the control you scramble to grasp will remain beyond reach.

"If your offer still stands," you say, enunciating each word with sarcasm, "I'll ask this: why did you not try to undo what you did?" Yet your mind whispers in reply that you knew the answer to that question, you has seen it after all.

"Because it is what we wanted." There is no hesitation in Wanda's reply. Firm and unyielding, just like her manner and her need. "You saw...did you not, what we want?" You shudder at the implication. The conversation has taken a turn onto dangerous territory. "While it's no conventional method, it was an unconscious act of my doing but at it's core; our desire, our hope, our future. We want this. We need this."

*Mind, body and soul.*

"You...you can't impose that kind of responsibility! For the sole happiness of yourself and Pietro to rest with me!" Whatever control you had hoped to gain is now lost as Wanda confirms the fate that awaits you.

"Of the billions of human souls on this Earth, the universe, by some divine proclamation through the power of my abilities has singled you."

"But you don't know me?! How can you not fight this? All three of us have had no say, yet the two of you have just blindly accepted it. Is that not opposite of the control you seek?" You had hoped to have made a point. Wanda and Pietro sought the power to wield control of their lives and thereby ensuring their happiness, but this situation opposed those ideals. "I'm not the right person for you. I won't make you happy or give you what you want. I wont be your failure."

They deserved happiness, from all you had witnessed, they of all people. But why couldn't they understand that your happiness, your rights, too mattered.

"While Pietro and I would never force you against your will – as hypocritical as that is - but as it stands, this is our situation. I knew not what I created in that moment. There was no malicious intent, nor desire to hurt another. Please believe this. I know not how to undo what is done, my powers still beyond my understanding." It is the ultimatum you knew was coming. There was no escape or negotiating. Your shoulders, tight and stiff from the ping-pong like interaction, slumped in defeat with emotional exhaustion. "All I ask is this: don't fight it. For whatever evolves, it would benefit us all. Please, take the chance to know my brother and I," Wanda's words are weighted and again, you feel that instinctual pull, mind and body drawn to her. Your emotions are disordered, a mixture of your own and theirs: longing, curiosity, jealousy, fear. They are far beyond blended that you can't ascertain which are yours and which are theirs.
I am deserving. Never parted. Why me/why them? I want to know you. What happens now? This doesn't make sense/This is pointless.

You shake your head, forced concentration in aim to reclaim clarity; the intruding thoughts fading. You're confused, at odds with yourself, with Wanda, with the world! Now what will you do? You could scream and curse, continue to accuse Wanda and continue a frivolous argument, but what would that achieve? You sigh, as if releasing the remaining pent-up anger, distress, and disbelief. You haven't forgotten Rogers stern and not-so-subtle command to improve upon your interactions with the Maximoff's. You want to laugh; If only he could have witnessed this.

“It's amazing,” your voice quiet, “despite all this, I believe you.” Looking pointedly at Wanda. While maintaining her neutral composure, there is a slip of emotion; you see the spark of hope - feel it. Ironically, there is some remorse, knowing that you will dissolve what hope she had. “But this doesn't change anything. We will go on our lives, preferably with mutual understanding that I can't give you and Pietro what you want.” And that's all you will elaborate on their unspoken details of desire. “I'll rely on you to convey my wishes.” And Wanda nods in understanding. “But...” And the sentence trails, leaving it open to interpretation of what will be said next. “I'm sure the three of us can come to some arrangement as we will still be living together. There's no reason why we can't...coexist with some civility.” Recalling the behaviours of all parties from the past week.

There is silence as Wanda digests your proposal and you gauge her, albeit, unable to deduce her thoughts and feelings in this moment. Typical.

“It is only right to respect your wishes. I can speak for Pietro and say we would both be glad to..."

While it remained a priority to apologise to Pietro, you have formulated that it might be best that interactions between yourselves is limited and that they would respect your boundaries. You would be courteous in hope that they too would be; in no doubt of Wanda but holding little hope for Pietro's conduct. You got an inkling that he was like that with all but her. At this point, the bond seemed unbreakable, but by Gods, you were persistent. There had to be a way, and you would endeavour to find it.

All the while as you're thinking, Wanda, indulges in your intentions. She will not press herself, nor allow Pietro to do such. It would take time for all partied to heal from today's events. However, despite you incessant nature to rebuff the connection that now binds the three of you, she knows that that too, will only take time. You just required some prompts along the way.

Chapter End Notes

...I refuse to promise when I may update because this took almost A MONTH, despite what I said. That's real life for you.

Sooo, did you see that coming? This has been the center of my idea from the beginning, it just took a while to get there. I hope you guys like it! There is still more things I need to clear-up in future chapters, but the foundations are pretty much in play now.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

"Forgiveness is such a profound, conscious, and unconscious state of affairs. You can't actually choose to do it. It simply happens to you."

- Bella Crawford, Hannibal

Chapter Notes

11K...I now rest, eternal.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

You can't remember the last time you had eight hours of uninterrupted, blissful sleep. If you had to contemplate it without immediate results, it had definitely been too long. Like every damn night of late, the recurrent villain that you shamelessly blame is your preoccupied mind. Its a torrent of imagery, memories and an abundance of information, but a fraction of Wanda could offer, but more than you can handle. With imaginative speculation, you ponder if the transference has left a residual of her, if such a thing were possible. However, considering the ever changing nature of the world and the universe, anything seemed possible...so you discard the thought as quickly as it came.

Hunger doesn't favour the situation either. Again, the absence of dinner dangerously promotes a trend which your stomach verbally protests with a drawn out whine. It could wait until morning, you think, having submitted to your exhausted state; physically, mentally...emotionally.

No position is comfortable for too long, tossing from one side to the another, or alternating between the questionable comfortability of lying on your stomach. With a frustrated huff, you flop over to stare at the ceiling - a blank canvas for your mind to imprint upon, paint and repaint again. Time is incalculable for you refuse to check the clock and watch as the passing minutes mock your inability to succumb. You need sleep. You want sleep! For in that unconscious state, you were free of the drama that continues to complicate your life.

You still your restlessness, reflecting on that thought and relinquishing to the matter that scratched painful at your mind, desperate to break free of your denial. The bond. The Maximoff's. The complication in your life. The bond had first manifested itself as a physical representation: a brand upon both arms, and in turn it had manifested question after question and without accompanying answers. But as of today, those questions had been successfully answered, thanks to the brutal honestly as delivered by the deceiver.

Wanda

The shock of discovering that she had created the bond, had bound your life in inconceivable ways, while frightened and awed you that her abilities transcended such possibilities, the significance of her deceit had judged her unworthy of your trust and therefore simultaneously withdrawing the possibility (however possible at that current time) of ever trusting her. Before said events, your
opinion of her character while still uncertain due to her mysterious nature, had the potential to become something...perhaps a friend. It had always been less likely for her twin, Pietro, who displayed his emotions with non-existent restraint, and was bordering on neurotic and a hazard to all but his sister. But, they were both their own enigmas for still you didn’t fully understand them, that being your own choice.

A thought tempts you to consider how things might have been different, should you had allowed her and Pietro to explain, when so many occasions had been presented. Its impossible to conclude how things would have alternatively developed, and you discard the pointless consideration.

In the heat of the moment, trying to comprehend the information and organising the whirlwind of emotions, both your own and theirs, in defence of your own frail state, you repelled her presence. Now, hours post the reveal and no longer blinded by emotion, clarity allows you to contemplate and reason the acquired facts. As a consequence, under your inscrutable analysis, your immediate distrust begins to fluctuate, unearthing the once prominent opinion of Wanda Maximoff.

It was a battle, multiple factors influencing the parasitic distrust which was determine to cling, inducing fear and wary of the Scarlet Witch. Manipulator. Seer. Sorcerer of reality. These were but some of the powers Wanda Maximoff possessed and not limited to for who knew what else she was capable of. That uncertainty alone prevents your distrust from evaporating. However, the matter of her powers was not of importance right now, something to evaluated at a later time.

A factor that now contended your distrust was that despite Wanda’s secrecy, you’re starting to suspect the influence of another party, specifically, Steve Rogers. The renowned strategist carefully formulated his plans based on acquired variables and information, and should you prove his influence, you were more than curious to know why he had determined that the truth be kept from you. If this be the case, you question how he had acquired the information from the Maximoff’s. As deduced from your observations of the pair, you bet that they would have been unwilling to reveal Wanda's direct involvement. You remember the meeting that had revealed everything: the mark that signified the exchange that had kick-started the following events; that had explained the nature of your ailments; the unrequited attention of the Avengers additional members, fresh off the battle field. The counsel that consisted of S.H.I.E.L.D’s elite and co-founding members of the Avengers Initiative had been carefully selected by Rogers to aid him in the explanation of what had been - still is- developing between yourself and the Sokovian Twins.

It’s impossible to forget the second encounter with Wanda and Pietro. Being so unconsciously attuned to their every word and action. Subject to their scrutiny and hunger. Wanda: poised and neutral of expression but her silence starving you of answers and flooding with silent questions. Pietro: hostile and eyes furious, heatedly objecting to the involvement of Rogers and his gathered counsel. When you reflect on that now, perhaps Wanda and Pietro originally objected to revealing the source of the bond to Rogers, and he (as you now suspected) intended to withhold that particular piece of information from you, the most significant piece to the puzzle. You're unsure if its a result of logical rationalisation or the bonds influence, but you're favouring the idea that Rogers had known that Wanda was its creator and had deemed that information classified.

Had Wanda covered Rogers involvement, opting to take your accusation and blame? But surely in the period of time that they were acquainted, she would not developed the need to protect him? Perhaps she felt guilty for withholding the information, originally wanting to inform you from the start. While it would be presumptuous to believe you knew the woman at all, a sixth sense whispers that she probably would have wanted to. In the end though, you're left with nothing but uncertainty and more questions.

You would bide your time to confront Rogers about your suspicions. After all that has happened,
you couldn't give a damn that he is Captain America and your superior. He was accountable should your accusations be founded.

That now left what would come tomorrow. You would keep your word as exchanged with Wanda. There would be no intentional avoidance on your part, not as you had previously acted. You would aim to facilitate them in their new home and provide support...that was the right thing to do, yet, fear of her, and her brother was a silent predator that stalked your better intentions. Wanda, all-powerful and all-knowing. Pietro, wild and coursing with emotions...and anger?

Your train of thought stops then. Pietro. Stark. The fight. The consequence for the premature reveal of Wanda's secret. After what happened, which you had unintentionally instigated, maybe you would have to withstand further negative behaviour from Pietro. He probably hated you, you can't help think. You now know with some understanding for why he is, the way he is. The beef between him and Stark is still a mystery you would uncover, but otherwise, maybe you were only deserving of his hostility.

_Pietro and Wanda. Wanda and Pietro._

There was none without the other and they knew nothing else, their history in vivid detail preluding their present inseparable company. And they had been a heart beat from losing one another, their connection severed with agonised cruelty. In an alternative reality, they might have grown to experience an expanded definition of their current family of two. _Family._ They had lost their parents. The cause for their loss alludes you but a foreboding feeling, a flavour of Wanda's memories, taunts you that the answer is so close to home. The agonised silent scream when Wanda thinks Pietro dead, when all recognition and connection to his life force is severed. Wanda's terror, anguish, despair, and rage flood your mind for a second time, unable to stall the now permanent memories she had shared. It were as if you a lived it yourself, felt every passing emotion and been the birth of every thought.

A hot flush and prickling eyes threaten to overcome you. The urge to cry, to cry the tears they had not and release the anguish in uncontrollable sobs. For they had been so strong but alone, frightened, angry, and in need. You can't deny their history. Your arm, while resting upon the mattress, is elevated slightly so that you can study the silver script with critical attention, tracing the lines and curves. There is tender affection about the act, but such insight alludes you and considering things, its probably for the best.

Perhaps its your distraction and lack of determination, but sleep finds you in the silent hours of the night; dragging you down, effortlessly and silently.

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**Beep. Beep.**

The high pitched alert tone eventually breaks the sleep barrier, drawing you to a conscious state. When at last you acknowledge your communicator, the startling realisation of the time jumps starts an adrenaline surge. A craved frenzy ensures as you dash about in a frantic state to ready yourself for work. Considering the (welcomed) sleep in, you're fortunately only five minutes late, but late nonetheless, which for a militarised organisation where punctuality was imperative, prized, and frowned upon if otherwise.

Despite the late hour, no circumstance overruled the desired task of hiding the bilateral marks. Some days you opted for concealer which is blended with meticulous attention; praise makeup! But today didn't allow for such indulgences considering the time restriction, so you choose the usual long-sleeved top. Clothed, cleaned, and ready. Time for another day in the life of me, you think sarcastically.
Exiting Avengers Tower and onto the helipad, you board the Quinjet, shouting an apology to whoever mans the controls, but the whirling wind, aggravated by the altitude, drowns your hail. Punching the button to elevate the ramp earns the attention of the unidentified pilot who rotates in their seat to address the action and confirm your presence before initiating take-off. With the ramp sealed and so to the gale outside, the mechanical creaks and hydraulics of the Quinjet occupy the otherwise silent space within. A quick attempt is made to tame your wind lashed hair but is quickly abandoned without a mirror to console.

It's not until you're secured that the realisation of being the sole passenger aboard strikes you. The Maximoff's aren't opposite you, their usual seat between destinations. The situation recalls the theory as formulated by Dr. Selvig, that distance between yourself and the Twins would stress the fragility of the bond. Remembering the blinding migraine ignites fear of a repeat experience.

You fight against the resistance of the safety halter, craning your body to better view the surrounding empty space. Objection and fear swell in your throat, ready to alert the pilot. As your eyes flit about, aimlessly seeking them, the sensation that is still alien yet familiar stalls your fearful searching. You feel them now. Obstructed by the interior layout, they have selected alternative seating but have accompanied your transport as required. A shaking breath ghosts your lips, relief blossoming. With a tug, the sensation lulls until its near non-existence. Transfixed on their invisible forms, you ponder: had they intentionally done that? Could they feel your emotions, spiraling out of controlled, fear at being alone.

Alone?

For whatever reason, you're thankful but not without the passing thought that perhaps Wanda had misinterpreted your meaning from yesterday. It was a twisted turn of events, were they now the ones to avoid you as you had been of their presence days prior? The thought is your company during the short flight, feeling the thrusters and shift in gravity as the aircraft is landed. You hate to admit the relief at having not to sit opposite them, especially considering the events of yesterday, and guilt bubbles vile in the pit of your stomach at the feeling.

No sooner has the Quinjet landed is the halter unclipped from your body. You stand waiting for the moment the ramp can be lowered and you can exit. The nagging remembrance of Rogers' stern prompt to talk to Pietro nips at you for the opportunity presented itself now. But you are driven from committing to the act, exiting out onto the platform, marching forward with no look behind.

When informed of your duties for today, you can't ignore the sneaking suspicious that you have been purposefully assigned mundane tasks that pose a lower risk to yourself and others. You can't object that the easy pace is welcomed and still providing the opportunity to fulfill your duty as a designated health practitioner. Pat is your accompanying partner, and that too, isn't without suspicion. If Dr. Selvig, Rogers and those involved were wanting an objective observer, then personally you wouldn't have chosen Pat. At the sign of an itch or sneeze might have her calling EMT and hustling you to a bed. The exaggerated thought influences a twitch of your lips and eyes crinkling in a private smile.

“What lucky person inspired that?” The voice taunts. You turn to Pat while maintaining your task. She should be coded, Hawkeye, so critical and observant, particularly of you.

“Someone you know,” you tease. It was refreshing, the strained atmosphere of the past week held no presence, and so easily the both of you reverted to the casual but treasured friendship.

“I would ask who, but where is the fun in that,” she replies, maintaining the light mood.

The morning passes and the conversations, while spars, remain civil and free of subtle probing on her account. It was a strained effort but appreciated. For just one day, you wanted it to be like it had
been, before all...this! So far, you had successfully avoided thinking about particular persons and associated events concerning said persons, but if wasn't without difficulty. In days past, often Pat had caught you paused, staring and unfocused before shaking yourself from the brief spell and continuing with work. But not today! With steeled determination nothing would-

"Their commencing trials today," Pat states casually. The information successfully captures your attention and you try to maintain composure. Well so much for that.

"Is that so?" you reply with forced disinterest.

The trials were but one of many examinations undertaken by prospective Avengers members. Sam Wilson and previously titled, Colonel James Rhodes, had completed theirs months prior and that left but two individuals who would be completing theirs. Under the surveillance of an elite team of scientists and undoubtedly Nick Fury, and Steve Rogers, the newly recruited Sokovian Twins who had been briefly dubbed Avengers in the fight against Ultron, would be required, without exception, to complete these tests to be titled official members of the Avengers initiative.

You had never witnessed the examinations yourself, due to restricted access, but S.H.I.E.L.D employees had a tendency to gossip, despite being an organisation built on the foundations of keeping secrets. While you had been privileged, as some might call it, to have participated in a initial medical examination of an Avengers member (or two), you had heard details of what they entailed. The Twins would be expected to display the extent of their abilities for analysis. Everything would be monitored from radical changes in air molecules, biological fluctuations, and electromagnetic pulses, but to name a few. It was strategic necessity to understand the inhuman powers and how they might develop techniques to combat them should those powers be used against the people of Earth...should the Twins default. There would be a succession of tests over a week period as S.H.I.E.L.D scientists gather data and greedily acquire the rare findings.

Restraints burn against protest

Your hands grip the edge of the counter in a white-knuckled hold, creaking in protest. What in the hell..?! Teeth against teeth grind together, grasping for your own reality as the memory is briefly relived. The images can't be forced away, personal willpower useless and with no choice but to suffer through it. It was everything they felt in that moment. A choked gasp breaks free and a fainting spell threatens to consume consciousness. If you're to have another episode, you weren't doing it here for Pat to fret over. Retreating, you excuse yourself, claiming to need the bathroom.

Pat's innocent conversation has successfully prevented all future effort of not thinking about the Maximoff's for the duration of the shift, and still too many hours remained. On your return from the bathroom, Pat directs you with a expression of worry which you brush off with exasperated reassurance.

"I'm fine."

In fervent stress, you gnaw the inside of your cheek while focusing poorly on work. Conflict has arisen in you. S.H.I.E.L.D couldn't be faulted for taking logical precautions, yet being privy to the Maximoff's history stirs objection at the thought of the repeat experience. You left obligated...to both of them.

They, Wanda and Pietro, were being subjected to the same treatment as subjected to by HYDRA. It didn't matter if the scientists were HYDRA or S.H.I.E.L.D, all that mattered was their powers and who could utilise them. You understand S.H.I.E.L.D, in doubt of the Twin's loyalty due to their previous affiliation with Ultron and HYDRA. The remarkable but deadly abilities of both Pietro and
Wanda (especially Wanda), S.H.I.E.L.D had to be cautious, calculative...prepared.

There was also the concern regarding Wanda's version of a Vulcan Mind Meld. The horrific and detailed experience of the experimentation she suffered. It had resurfaced, independently, disregarding your own will. Like the memory were an entity of its own. But that was ridiculous...right? They were just memories! Then how? You realise its futile to try explain the scenario, and you hope, despite the daunting shadow, it was a once off situation.

Pat watches keenly, every movement and stray of concentration observed and noted. Should she be reporting to someone, really she had nothing to report. Just a nurse with poor work ethic and recently adopted hypochondriac. You resent that your work suffered consequently of what was happening. It was just another addition to your every-growing list of dilemmas, but there was one in-particular the nagged you.

"You will go to them and apologies..."

The recollection of Rogers stern command echoes annoyingly but also as a bitter reminder of your involvement. The private moment between Wanda and yourself bore some understanding of your personal wishes, and of theirs as well (despite your objection for what they wanted). That now left the lone individual in Rogers expectation. It was daunting to speculate how that scenario would transpire.

It wouldn't be as simple as, "Yo! Sorry about ignoring you and the like. Oh! And then there was the whole using Stark as a human shield, and my tactless mouth, but we're all good yea?" Yep. You couldn't foresee that transpiring well, imaging the flare in Pietro's eyes and the palpable hostility. But there was no avoiding this. Argh, and as a side note, you conclude that Stark, Tony Bloody Stark, probably required an apology to. Shit, shitty, shit!

A stifled groan is uttered in your absorbed state. How hard was it to apologies to someone? You catch Pat's eye only to look away sharply but as the seconds tick by an idea strikes you. Your mouth opens and air drawn in to initiate a conversation, but you stop, considering the thought further. You repeat the action only to pause again. Pat sits there observing indecisive process with amusement but eager to hear it all the same. Anything that might explain your distracted state and how she much help.

"I'm having trouble apologising to someone," you say at last, sharing eye contact with her. For Pat, its odd that you're having difficulty with such a thing, and all the more, who was it that required such made it all the more delicious to know more. She considers the problem, face etched with thoughtful contemplation.

“Difficult how?” she questions.

How easy it would be to explain that due some ignorant taunting on your part, it had initiated a brawl between Tony Stark and Pietro Maximoff, and following said brawl, sternly told by none other than Captain Frickin' America, that you were morally obliged to apologies for your involvement. That kind of difficult! Of course, you weren't going to say that. The technicalities of the situation didn't matter, aka: weren't for Pat to know. So you settle for expressing your difficulty in its simplest form.

“I just don't know how!” The explanation is more than lacking but your bemused expression justifies the significance of your problem. It prompts Pat to aid you solve the conundrum from scratch.

“Well then,” she begins, “I guess first you have to establish why you're apologising.” You frown at the advice. Why else would someone apologies to another unless they had done something untoward them whether intentionally or unintentionally. She notes your confusion and continues. “What I
mean is: who is the focus of your apology? Do you seek to express remorse for your transgression and the negative impact suffered by the other, or do you aim to benefit yourself by apologising and thereby relieving yourself of your guilt?"

Well shit, that was deep. You consider her words, frown deepening. Besides the expectation of Steve Rogers, which Pat was unaware, you realise that while you knew that the Maximoff's, that Pietro, was rightly deserving of an apology for you acknowledged that you were - to a degree - at fault, there was a part of you that wanted to be guilt free and not owing them anything. So you summaries then what mattered now was to determine which of the three influencing factors would outweigh the other and drive you to face your fears and talk to Pietro.

Pat continues, breaking your contemplation, "Remember though, that in the event of apologising, the recipient isn't obligated to accept." And she notices the grimace in response.

The conversation with Pat is with you for the remainder of the shift. It follows you on your journey back to Avenger's Tower, noting the continued avoidance of the Maximoff's. You ponder your feelings while you eat dinner, while you shower and while you lie in bed. In the moments when again, all you want is to sleep, all the thinking and assessment of your feelings approaches boiling point. With frustration you call out to Jarvis and ask of Pietro's location. The bond has been silent, too silent and while that should please you, the quiet is unnerving. Jarvis promptly informs that Pietro is but down the hall in Wanda's bedroom.

With resolve and determination, you march down the corridor to the opposite end. Standing in front of the door, your hand rises to commence a segment of knocks only to still, knuckles hovering mere centimetres from the wooden surface. Why did you pause? The longer you stand there, inactive, mind blank, your determination crumbles. You can feel the baited breath as the room before you waits. You had to apologies! So why was it so hard to just initiate a simple knock?

The short lived plan concludes with swift abandonment and the slam of your bedroom door.

You're starting to suspect that the cowardly abandonment two days prior is punishing you. At risk of boring repetition, sleep was still lacking...well more than lacking, near non-existent! But it wasn't just sleep. You had been subjected to more memories. While some were worse than others, the emotional torment that accompanied each debilitating replay was taxing. There was no warning, only an immediate flash of images, some gruesome, terrifying, or heartbreaking. And every-time you would freeze mid-task or awake from sleep. There was no controlling them, only ride through each experience. Considering, it's amazing you manage to remain functional even if only poor version of a functional human being.

You were stirred from sleep for the umpteenth and give up on trying to reclaiming more. Its a bit after five, and optimistically you think that not too bad. You ready for work, beady eyes peering back at you from the mirror while you ready in the bathroom. The extra time allows for the chance to make breakfast, but you grimace at the thought of food, instead making an extra strong coffee. Leaning against the kitchen island, you wonder if sleep deprivation was karma for still having not approached Pietro since your pathetic attempt. Perhaps if you did, maybe sleep might come easy tonight. Perhaps your fatigued stated lacked energy to wallow in selfish denial but in an enlightening epiphany, you knew that your own guilt outweighed moral responsibility. It was a fact difficult to digest, but acknowledged nonetheless.

Two tablets are thrown back to mute the dull headache. Kick it in the butt before it became debilitating. As the morning minutes tick by, ribbons of steam from the idle coffee swirl in a dance and you watch tiredly. You forget to drink the beverage, hazed concentration on watching the
evaporating display. It's not until your communicator beeps to signal an incoming transmission that you break the unfocused stare. It reads that you are expected to visit Dr. Selvig for an examination. Oh joy. At a quarter past six, you down the untouched and now cold coffee, gather your bag and walk to the foyer attached to the helipad.

The elevator softly whirls, accelerating upwards, and you briefly divulge by closing your eyes, the sound effect soothing. The tranquil moment allows for deviation of thought (from the otherwise fiercely dominate consciousness) to speculate that the aid of Dr. Google nor your own knowledge was required to suspect a mild case of acute insomnia. That would be a first, you think tiredly. The absence of the fleeting thought is immediately reclaimed and so refocused on your dilemma.

Time seemed distorted, the elevator ride seemingly longer than normal, but at last the doors open and so to your eyes. You were early, exactly as you planned. That way the Maximoff's (Pietro) couldn't bypass you and it would present the opportunity to talk to him, and thereby improving your karma and sleeping like a rock. It marks only two minutes since your arrival when the elevator bings and nerves flutter in the pit of your coffee sloshed stomach. You straighten and turn, prepared to meet the pair. Your stance falters slightly on sight of Steve Rogers.

This was unexpected and most inconvenient.

He's dressed in uniform, rarely had you seen him without. Its not since his intervention between Stark and Pietro that you'd seen him. His disposition radiated purpose as he strode towards you; expression set, shoulders tight, and target sighted. It was not by coincidence he was here, and those reasons could be counted on one hand and easily limited to just one.

“Officer (Y/L/N),” he greets.

“Captain Rogers.” The formality is returned.

Silence follows but it weighted by what remains unsaid, the reason for which Rogers has come. He masks any awkward attempt at a casual conversation by observing you critically. You avert your eyes, wandering around the room, trying to shrug off the invasive assessment. Hell, you should be used to that by now having been subjected countless times. Had you not been functioning on reserve batteries, how you would enjoy portraying effortless innocence in a display of passive defiance.

Perhaps he noted the purple hue bagging your eyes; the strained, stiff posture aimed to hide fatigue. Never had you a reason to think ill of Steve Rogers; he was America's sweet heart, defender during the world war, lost and then miraculously found. The defender of the underdog. Considering the shared residency and place of work (although separated by the field of specialty) you hadn't seen him since his timely intervention in Stark's workshop. The observation isn't meant by a longing to see him, in fact, you dread the early morning encounter. It was a matter of waiting in suspense for when Rogers broached the topic.

With an intake of breath, you prepare for his onslaught.

“While this is unfortunate time to address this topic-” And here we go, “-evidence would suggest it can no longer be postponed. I have received from multiple sources, accounts of the interactions between yourself and the Maximoff's. Correction: lack of. There is also the addition of my own observations. Given my involvement during the examinations this week, I have noted the behaviours of the Maximoff's, particularly that of Pietro. While I understand that the move to a new country and integrating into a foreign culture and the environment at S.H.I.E.L.D, will be shocking and take time to adapt – I would know – its hard to ignored his increasing volatile behaviour.” He pauses in his report to gauge your reaction.
At its core, S.H.I.E.L.D was an intelligence gathering agency with a variety of resources at Rogers disposal. The surprising fact was that he had, void of guilt, admitted to utilising that power to monitor you. The question was: why? You weren't inclined to part-take in another verbal battle of strategically evasions to Rogers probing, but you hold out to discover where he was headed with this.

“It begs the question why, though I have a good idea,” he adds, as if he were so sure you were the reason...and how right he was, “but I want to hear it from you. Due to the circumstances of our last meeting, I had asked you to resolve the dispute between yourself and Pietro that had instigated the conflict between him and Stark. I assumed you would acknowledge a sense of responsibility considering your involvement, however ignorant.” Visibly you wince, his comment serving a reminder for the secret rift that divided Tony Stark, Wanda and Pietro, that you had naively manipulated. “It shouldn’t be necessary to receive a command from a superior office in order to enact on what most would consider a morally influenced action.”

“But judging from Pietro’s behaviour, it’s evident that either no effort has been made on your part, or something else prohibits mutual resolution. For your sake, I hope its the later. So I ask you: prove me wrong,” he challenges, and awaits your defence.

Rogers spiel questions his knowledge about the bond and at what depth he understand the significance and complication entailed. For him, all he might know is that Wanda, Pietro and yourself, are psychologically connected. Did he not realise the extent for which is surpassed that?

Before you can verbalise your reply, a further interruption occurs.

The elevator dings and instantly you forget Steve Rogers, eyes skirting to doors. They slide to reveal it's two occupants. Wanda stands ready to exit, and Pietro slouched against the interior, arms crossed and his expression tight. They exit under the observant attention of Rogers and yourself. You remember then, the intention for arriving early and the resolution that you had intended before Rogers incalculable appearance. Your defence against Rogers, and apology for Pietro, stalls in your throat, on first sight of him.

As if instinctively, he catches your gaze and pauses. If it were possible for his face to hardened further, now would be the time. Wanda stands by his side, watching him. It’s not his physical presences that impacts, but the indiscernible flood of emotion that radiates from him. The roaring engines of the Quinjet breaks the brief exchange and Pietro strides forward shifting his attention. He brushes past with no further acknowledgment, directing his focus on the Quinjet outside. Wanda falls instep beside him, she too, not sparing a glance. Their footsteps fade as the automated glass doors seal and separate the opposing environments.

Well that didn’t favour your defence. Reluctantly, you turn back to address Rogers for there was no escaping after what just transpired. He looks...disappointed, and in-turn resurfaces the guilt within you.

“Anything you want to add to that?” he asks evenly, and he needn’t elaborate the context of the question. He betrayed nothing, or so someone might think, but association had provided the opportunity to observe people like Rogers, and notice the subtleties that alluded to their intention or true meaning. As such, your expression sharpens. The question suggested that he found you guilty and any attempt on your part would be futile.

Tightly crossed arms and stoned faced, he challenged you to reply. Self-titled judge, jury, and executioner. How that pissed you off. Somehow you refrain from throwing your hands in the air in a display of frustration. Too bad you couldn’t master your mouth.

“What would be the point when already I stand before the firing squad,” you retort with
insubordinate indignation.

“Dammit!” And the outburst startles you for he had only ever been reserved of character. “Is this a game to you?” he questions with biting accusation.

“If it were, I would simply be a pawn in all this.” Referring to S.H.I.E.L.D’s - to his - manipulative and shadowed intentions.

“All this, as you so described, could have been avoided if you had apologised.”

“Evidently he doesn't want to hear it!” you shout but it confirms Rogers’ suspicions. Pietro’s obvious abhorrence to your presence, Rogers' scathing confrontation, and your own guilt and conflict combines to create a concoction of frustration.

Rogers' expression turns grave, “That doesn't excuse your lack of trying. Can you stand there and honest to God, acquit yourself of any responsibility?”

You motion to speak, only to close your mouth. No, as much as you wanted to verbally combat Rogers, you wouldn't - couldn't - deny that. Your silence is all the answer he needs. The guilt swells painfully and suddenly you can't stand to look at him see it reflected. You turn away. Rogers watches and his shoulders sag with frustrated exhaustion. It wasn't a great start to the morning, for either of you.

He radiated pure disappointed and the overbearing empathy risks to consume you. This wasn't over, he wouldn't allow that, but you had to get away, even for a moment. You cast a quick, “Excuse me, but I'll be late for work.” And swiftly make for the Quinjet.

On board and seated, you keep your eyes downcast, refusing to meet Rogers as he passes to secure his seat besides the pilot. What a shit of a day this was turning into. You're acutely aware that consistent to recent behaviour, the Twins have chosen their distanced seats and your glad for that and hate yourself for being glad.

Your nails suffer abuse as the trip and inevitable destination draws near, and with the landed lurch, you're propelled into action. Clumsy fingers work frantically to remove the belt in an effort to disembark first. You needed to be beyond Wanda's probing abilities, away from Pietro and the constant reminder he served for what a shit person you are, to be beyond Rogers scathing disapproval. Intentionally you gain momentum, exiting down the steep ramp, extended strides distancing you. Its unfortunately a wasted effort when you're force to stop.

“Officer (Y/L/N)!”

Within the perimeter of S.H.I.E.L.D operations, Rogers adopts his authoritative tone, the cutting edge echoing in the hangar bay and stalling bystanders to watch with curiosity. Immediately you halt, instinctual submission taking over at the beckon of a commanding officer. But that doesn't prevent you from clenching you jaw, hands fisting in pent-up frustration. Your eyes close, trying to calm your frayed disposition.

The busy environment drowns out subtle noise but you don't need to hear the departing foot-steps from the Quinjet to know three pairs of feet approach from behind. You steel your resolve, feeling the Maximoff's incoming by the intensifying pull. Their presence pass with disregard and your eyes open to watch their distancing forms.

Rogers waits patiently and his presence is at last acknowledged when you turn to face him with the last of remains of your composure.
"Have I overestimated your involvement in this?" he asks. "You came highly praised from your colleagues. They assured me of no doubt in your abilities."

"The ability to do my job." The emphasis bites, and quickly with the addition of, "sir," you try to maintain some formality.

“But what of your duty to your fellow colleagues? To them?”

“Permission to speak freely?” Because you totally hadn't been until now. He gauges you briefly, your insubordination had already tested his patience and it would be by some stroke of luck that he allowed you to do anything from here on out.

“Let’s hear it,” he grants.

“There is an ulterior motive, because there always is when S.H.I.E.L.D is involved,” you start, and Rogers frowns at the implication of your words, “and until you tell me what that is, I can't hope you give you what you want, should that even be attainable. The three of us have been throw into this situation without prior warning and you expect me to befriend them like its an easy task. Its not something that can be rushed!”

“There's so much more this...this bond, than what you think you know,” you conclude, for that's all you intend to elaborate on the topic. For Rogers to understand, to have any concept on what frayed his hopeful and secret intentions for the three of you, you would have to reveal the intimate details that Wanda has confessed.

Already you suffered the scrutiny of your peers for the prestigious move to Avengers Tower; were now the subject of interest and guinea pig for the medical division privy to the details of the situation involving said move; the irrevocable interest of a brother-sister relationship which sought to dominate all aspects of your life. To explain in detail, and he would want details, it was embarrassing and also questioned if you had the permission of the Maximoff's to confide such information, for no matter your opposition, it was personal for them also.

“Then help me to understand,” he urges. This was bigger than what Rogers had foreseen, the Maximoff's obviously keep their own secrets from him regarding the true nature of the shared connection. Your silence only endeavours to solidify your guilt and Rogers huffs with laughter, incredible.

“See that, that is only damaging what little favour you still retain. As demonstrated, your conduct can be interrupted as intentionally aiming to sabotage the efforts of S.H.I.E.L.D to rehabilitate the Maximoff's and your own responsibility as tasked to them.”

Rogers accusation strike painfully and you bristle in response, squandering the guilt. It was so easy for him, for a by-stander to dictate your actions and so deem them in error. You want to scream at him, drop your composure and let forth all that has been bottled. It was so easy for him to read the scientific reports which measured and calculated the shifts in neurological patterning, to read the psyche evaluations, all words on a piece of paper compared nothing to the experience. To be consumed by it. To not know if you were really you, or a fraction of someone else. To be tormented by horror and desires that weren't your own. To lose grip of reality.

You have no idea what its been like!

Painfully, you repress the outburst, but oh how you wanted, desperately so, to confide in someone. But that person wouldn't be Steve Rogers. He waits for your response patiently but with pursed lips and knitted brows.
“Your expectations might have progressed differently should significant information not have been intentionally withheld from me, on your orders might I add!” It was a risk, a huge risk to accuse Rogers based on unfounded suspicions. Oh gods, your career and position was on the chopping block, but he falters. Was that proof? Were the late night and sleep deprived formulations substantiated? “Do you deny it?” And how you hate the pleading tone. You needed just one person on your side!

Momentarily, guilt moulds his face. “It was an executive decision,” he confirms, and a strangled huff of laughter responds in kind. “I can't discuss parameters, but it wasn’t not unfounded.”

“Yea,” you agree, “that's always the case.” Disheartened, you pull yourself into an Officer's stance, saluting him. “If you'll excuse me, sir, I have an appointment I will otherwise be late for.” And without waiting for permission, stiffly your swivel and march for the science department.

The medical team in which you had been directed to it met with your graceless entrance: storming through the doors to plant yourself upon an examination table. You manage to get away with monosyllable replies to the repetitive questioning of each scientist that prompts you for information. Selvig watches distantly, noting the behaviour and formulating his own questions. You like to think that your state deters the scientist from keeping you longer, and so they dismiss you until you're required to attend a follow up. For the remainder of the day, you repelled people from your presence, well, all except, Pat. She was an exception, something to do with being friends and all. But otherwise, you're only company is self-pity, despair, and loneliness.

Strangulation

The world is dark and unrecognisable as your mind, suffering the aftermath of the sudden awakening, is disorientated and gripped with fear and irrationality. Choked gasps and the pounding of blood drowns out all other sensors, the audible sensitivity prolonging the process. As the physical stresses calm and jumbled cognition of your mind rearranges to allow logical thought, your elbows are drawn to support the weight of your body as you view the room.

Your bedroom, once considered a haven, now tainted with a residue of the hidden crimes of the world. With fatigued effort, you push to sit and cradle your head, the sweat smearing across the plane of your forehead and hands. The stress induced activity of your heart slows, like retreating footsteps fading into the distance. It hadn't been a dream but a compilation of memories, brilliant in detail, surreal and nightmarish. They are fading, retreating to the dark corner of your mind to surface again on your unsuspecting person. The accompanying emotions are palpable; a reminder of what your dream state had witnessed and suffered.

The context of the screams is without misinterpretation. Desire birthed transcendence and surrender sanctioned immorality.

“Miss (Y/L/N)?” Jarvis inquires softly. “Are you alright?” The A.I's voice breaches the void of white noise. Its a welcomed conformation that you are indeed awake and not still within a dream state.

“Just...just a bad dream,” you whisper.

“May I offer assistance?” The prompts sounds in a courteous manner.

“No.” The decline rasps and highlights the parchment quality of your mouth. At the dreadful sound, you promptly clear your throat to offer an enunciated reply. “No. I'm fine.”
“Very well. Should you need anything-”

“Yeah. Thanks Jarvis,” you mutter.

You needed to leave. The sheets are thrown from your body and with hastened strides, you escape the bedroom. In the hallway, the door is a barrier and a breathe of relief breaks the unconscious restrain. Relief and fatigue dominate thought and action. Wearly you walk to the medium situated room that divides the corridor. It's dark, the waning moon providing little light through ceiling high window. Your steps bypass the lounge suit, feet padding silently across the carpet to slump in a heap on the floor. Knees to chest, you lean against the window plane, the crisp of night cooling the cheek that presses to it.

New York is alive, even at night. From the advantaged view, the streets hundreds of meters below are traveled by yellow and red lights, navigating the quietened environment. Lights decorate the towering, cemented forms of the adjacent buildings, like ornaments on a Christmas tree, sporadically placed. Stars are near absent due to the light pollution of the city, a faint twinkle breaching the artificial light barrier, canvassed to the navy blue of night. The moon is making its descent, the Earth rotating away to begin another cycle. The crescent light is shadowed intermittently by fairy floss clouds. It's glow illuminating the obstructive and otherwise dull fluff, languidly carried by the invisible influence of the wind.

As your breath ghosts the glass, it fogs the surface of exposure to slowly rescind and evaporate, only to reappear again when you exhale. You observe the process, heavy lidded and unbearably tired. A finger traces through the condensation, the meaningless lines forming droplets of water. It's cold, the still air of the room. Your arms prickle and form bumps but you don't fight the growing cold, submitting to its effects.

They come again. The screams. The agony. The pain! The thoughts are impossible to control, invading your mind again since waking you. Too tired. You can't fight them and in self-defense you curl into the seated position; knees encompassed in a strangulating grip to flush them against your chest, and your face tucked into the mold, hiding the anguish that morphs your face.

Was this punishment? To be subject to their torture as recompense for your ignorance?

The vividly, violent assault subsides but the suspense remains, throbbing with every heart beat of the undetermined time of their return. With every recurrent attack, its like they are imprinted into your own memory. A virus. They were not yours to keep nor had wanted them! The tension is exhausting and your body slumps; arms falling to the ground and legs splayed out. Your head returns to rest on the transparent wall that separates you from what would be a horrendous fall.

There is a shift, a feeling immeasurable by science, as if the dynamics of the lounge room and you within it is disturbed. It is neither startling or unwelcome. You sit a moment longer to process this curious sensation should you be tricked by sleep deprivation. Yet the feeling remains, persistent, and its then you confirm that someone trespassers in the dead of night.

Your head rolls, mechanical like to acknowledge the visitor. All the while the room is dark and shadowed, the white hair of the now identified stranger is like a beacon, immune to the vacuum effects of the dark void. Pietro stands in the middle of the room dressed in his pajamas's; a loose fitting shirt and long slacks. If only his expression could loosen up like his clothes, you think. The twin was either limited to his portrayal of emotions or you have yet to distinguish one from another due to the extreme likeliness of each. Even at this time, the brooding face and narrowed eyes are not absent and you suspect your personal influence for expression. You hadn't earned otherwise.

You meet the gaze, questioning the reason for why he would be awake at this hour...however late or
early it might be. Should he be questioning yours, its not evident. Nothing transpires, only the palpable connection and the still silence.

You decide to initiate a conversation. “Hey,” you utter weakly, throat still gravely from the neglect of water.

You can't ascertain why, perhaps due to fatigue or tired from fighting the inevitable, but you're not scarred of him...for the first time in your acquaintance. Its comforting, that when most slumber away the night, you're no longer alone to face the agonisingly long hours of night. You have a companion.

“Hello,” he replies. Its awkward, timid almost and surprising, expecting assertiveness of his displayed character or gruff acknowledgement from him. Was he unsure of what to say? Or perhaps how to address you considering past experience.

He steps closer and it brings him towards the limited reach of moonlight. The light refracts, amplifying the contrast of his hair in comparison to the surroundings. The darkened roots intensifies the colour and highlights the deep set stubble that frames his face. The casual observation is calculated and soon forms a comment to be blamed by delirium.

“Your hair is pretty.” The comment, while spoken aloud, was whispered more so to yourself but undeniably for Pietro to hear. Whissfull.

His stops abruptly, startled by the absurdity of the comment, his eyes drop and look away briefly soon to return and gauge you cautiously. Was he embarrassed? Or was that mistaken anger?

Louder this time, “It was a compliment,” you say to verify your intention should he mistake it for a jibe.

“Thank you.”

There it was again: hesitance. You tilt your head to better accommodate his proximity and maintain eye contact. You probably looked like shit; hair matted with sweat, tear stained, haunting, sunken eyes. Vanity wasn't a dominate trait of your personality but you tried to maintain a good appearance, but in this moment, starved of rest and clairvoyance, you don't give a flying fuck! Pietro doesn't allude to his opinion of your appearance, instead asking what you had silently asked him.

“Why are you here?” he asks. Ah, there it was: assertive.

The brief spell that a provided a distraction from your current situation is broken. At the question, its your turn to break contact, turning to gaze unfocused through the glass and across the city of your attention this evening. There was no reason to hide the truth nor did you possess the energy to provide a sarcastic reply.

“I can't sleep,” you reply, void of emotion.

That was the fact of the matter but you don't want to tell Pietro the reason why and hope he doesn't ask. To repeat what you have seen, time and time again, stalked and punished. To admit you witness a repeat of his suffering; their pain; tender and desperate moments exchanged between himself and Wanda; feeling his fury, born of sorrow, misguided and irrational, warped for the purpose of others; their desire: deep, unrelenting, pure and far-reaching across the universe.

Perhaps he knew, in no doubt that Wanda would have told Pietro of their exchange in the gym post the brawl in Stark's workshop. But did they know that you were plagued by the memories, the nightmares of their life? That the foreign consciousness tortured, powerless to control them, straining to push them away and the wrecked emotions.
Pietro kneels beside you, feeling an electrolysed energy surge at the proximity and you turn to acknowledge him visually. It was strange, this sixth sense, but it was only tied to them. He's scowling, brows knitted, lips pursed, but the more you study the expression, you see the subtle characteristics that lead you to believe that it was in fact concern, not contempt.

“You will sleep,” he says with such certainty. It was as if the very words would induce the biological function without fail. “Come,” he prompts, accent influencing the pronunciation.

He stands awaiting you to follow, and follow you do for what alternative where there? A hand is offered and you look at it, processing the meaning of the gesture. On contact, placing you hand on his, the feeling is instantaneous, as he pulls you to your feet. You feel revitalised, energy surging throughout your body and you relish in the feeling. Seconds count the prolonged contact as it some would classify as evolving from a friendly gesture into intimate territory. The contact, however beneficial, is severed when you retract your hand from the warm clasp. The effects are swift, reverting back to your fatigue state, the empowerment now a sweet and fleeting moment.

Inquisitively, you look to Pietro, had he felt the same? Pietro's face has that intensity again and coiled like a restrained spring - pained. With a steady breath he steps back, allowing for space. You appreciate the gesture, but it reminds you of the foundation for which he probably feels obligated.

“Pietro,” you say. You doubt his attention could be diverted in this moment, keenly waiting with patience for what follows. You look away, finding him distracting as you try to process what you want to say, a headache slowly blooming. Grimacing, you crush the heel of your hand against your eye, rubbing the area in an effort to both conceal the welling tears and massage the dull throb. “Pietro,” you repeat, desperation verbalised through a choked sob. Fatigue is clouding your judgement, or perhaps your encounter has exhausted you of what strength you had remaining. “I'm sorry.” The strangled apology slips.

It wasn't sufficient, it didn't portray everything and all you wanted to say. To apologies for you own rash behaviour; for not giving them a chance; for being unsympathetic for the siblings who recovered still from the war of their country; for failing your duty as an advocate of health and sympathy, as

The temporary crafted space is nullified when steps toward you. “No,” he shakes his head but voice insistent. You look to him, thinking he is dismissing the apology, but he continues, "now is not the time," his voice reassuring, "but thank you." The acknowledgement and reciprocation has you undone, the tears cascade down your cheeks in hot trails try restrain another sob. He smiles, for that you as certain. Small, just a quirk of his mouth but it shines in his eyes.

"Come," he says again, and you nod.

A sniff and no movement, an arm comfortably prompts you forward, guiding your steps. Across the room, he guides you, warm against your side. You could sleep now, with no shame just slump in his arms. A figure awaits the approach and within distance to identify the individual, your heart hammers. Wanda, arms crossed and fingers twitching wit untamed movement, watches with doe-eyed concern.

Pietro can feel the hesitance in your body as you approach. It hasn't been since the reveal of the truth that you and Wanda have shared contact. Fear flutters at the sight of the Scarlet Witch and her concern deepens. She steps toward you and instinctively you pull back but Pietro's arm secures your retreat. Looking to him, he nods and attention flits back to Wanda.

A hand reaches out and you start, knowing what power those fingers possess.

"I can help," she says.
A calm influence disguised to restrain you and suppress the flight instinct, allows Wanda to touch a finger to your temple. Your vision clouds with red hue and soon blankets with black. The last knowledge you have is frailty of your knees as they buckle beneath the weight of your body. There is a whisper, so soft yet desperate prolongs the succumbing darkness for a mere moment.

"Please forgive me."

Its been near an hour since the conclusion of your shift. Typically, you sign-off and proceed to the hangar bay where immediately you would board the Quinjet and be on your merry way. Well not today. So here you wait, here being the 'transition' room (as it was so called). A glass wall provided a unobstructed view of the bustling platform of aircraft technicians, pilots, and aircraft. Never before had you been presented with the opportunity to appreciated this section of headquarters. All environments were usually so fast paced that it restricted the chance to marvel in the magnificence and capabilities of the facility.

After thirty minutes waiting, you inquired with flight control whom stated that the transport destined for Avengers Tower was on-hold, supposedly its passengers had been delayed. From there it was easy to summaries that Wanda and Pietro haven't finished with their own engagements for the day. That left little choice but to sit and wait, and recent history proved that your idle mind was a playground for all manner of shenanigans.

That morning, you had awoken, communicator blaring its alarm. In a zombie-fied state, you had readied yourself for work and were soon boarding the aircraft in the usual routine fashion. Slowly, the events of last night started to piece together and at last, half-way through the shift, you're confident that you can recall the entirety of said events. Pietro. He had come to your aid. From there you remember the delirious exchanges, including the emotional apology. It strikes severely that Pietro had initiated contact, not you. Your opportunity had expired and being the better half, he stepped forward when he wasn't obligated to.

Wanda was there to and your fear, you remember, spiked on seeing her. Remembering all that she was capable of and her memories that tormented you. But she presented as a friend, Pietro's accomplice to aid in relieving you of the torment. And she had been, with no doubt for you still taste the brush of her feelings, anguished and guilty for what she had unconsciously allowed you to suffer. Those memories, the source of too many sleepless nights, were absent. Forever you were a guardian to her shared history, and only should you choose to recall them, would you have to subjected to their cruelty. It was not all bad: the affection moments between herself and Pietro, were an example of despite all the shit they had suffered, something good rise above it; the two of them.

After Wanda's intervention, all is blank. You guess that what-ever she did knocked you out...potentially into Pietro's arms...who probably carried you and put you to bed. Great. This was turning into a bloody Disney tale! Well, for better probably, you admit. At least you slept like a log.

Despite last night's events, the Maximoff still chose to reclaim their preferred seating. It was ridiculous really. The bond felt stagnated which was the best way you could describe it. Its then that you propose that things wouldn’t progress like this no more. This goddamn apology was happening here and now! As soon as Pietro walked through that door! A flare of confidence and righteousness (gah, Rogers is a bad influence) floods through you. You can do this at last!

The rattle of the handle and squeak of door hinges evaporates all previous intentions as the Twins proceed to enter the room. There was a hushed exchange of words, incoherent but urgent, you can interpret. The conversation ends immediately when they acknowledge you, Pietro stopping abruptly. You stare wide-eyed having not anticipated their arrival so soon. You hadn't had sufficient time to psyche yourself up! Confidence is rapidly deflating, you think. Quickly a new feeling takes hold:
fear and nervousness.

You stand, clumsily so, hands clasping together to prevent the itch to fidget under their scrutiny. You gulp the building lump in your throat, willing the ability to speak, preferably with coherent pronunciation.

“Ah, Pietro,” you greet, voice quaking, “can we talk?”

If he were shocked by the random and long-time-coming exchange, he effortlessly disguises it. He does, however, cast a glance to Wanda who nods, perhaps encouragingly. There is a small tinge of fascination while observing the silent communication. When he returns his attention to you, the only reply you receive is a nod but it was a positive sign all the same.

Movement tears your focus to observe Wanda exiting the scene, allowing it to unfold between Pietro and yourself, for this was a necessity that needed to happen. She spares a look to you before the door closes and conceals her. It’s difficult to interpret the meaning, should it have any. She was always difficult to interpret.

So that left the two of you. Alone. For the second time within a twenty-four hour period. The much anticipated union between Pietro and me, you think theatrically. Standing before him, he was much changed compared to last night. Then, he had been open, inviting, all the while semi guarded during his interaction. But now, he had converted back to what you presume he was always like; he shielded himself, arms tight and secured but expression board to portray otherwise. To you, it translated that he didn't want to be here, no, he didn't want to talk to you. It's was disconcerting to say the least, but despite what he wanted, you know that this had to happen.

Stupidly you realise that despite the emotional build-up in preparation of this moment, you haven't planned nor practiced what you wanted to say. The silent seconds stretch as you piece together coherent thought. Time for improvisation.

“Umm...” you vocalise in aim to fill the void. “So I, ah, I just wanted to say thanks. For last night...” Your hands clench and flex but the action is therapeutic in a sense, and so with a deliberate exhale, you try to elaborate, a tad more eloquently. “You weren't obligated to help me and I was far from deserving it, so thank you.”

It was stiff and with blundering execution, but you don't allow much thought to evaluate as you wait for his reply which could potentially forecast the next few minutes. To accept or deny.

You expect him to remain silent, his brooding demeanor the answer you would receive, but thankfully, he offers a reply.

“You are welcome,” he says casually, filling you a false sense of positivity, “but it is Wanda who is deserving of your gratitude, not I.”

The premature feeling deflates instantly hearing his advocation of Wanda's intervention. It held an underlying message. If this were to progress further, you had no choice but to acknowledge Wanda's role, even if it were of her doing.

“You're right.” You calmly agree. “And among other things, Wanda and I have our own stuff to sort out, which we will, but its something that I need to do in my own time.” A flash of skepticism passes his face, as if doubting your promise, for recent history didn't favour the possibility.

“It might come too late,” he states. The implication of his meaning sinks horridly in your gut.

And so you ask, “Is it too late for us?” You congratulate yourself for maintaining composure, but
inside, any hope of reconcile withers painfully.

He doesn't reply, just stands there, immovable and measured as his blue eyes pierces yours. The silence grows and you begin to mistake it for his rejection of you and your failing attempt to right the shared history with one another.

Unable to tolerate the growing anxiety, you blurt, “Look, I'm trying here and your silent treatment isn't helping! And we both know it won't get us anywhere.” Pietro's brow quirks in a comedic fashion, as if amused by the outburst but his response only fuels the blossoming frustration. “I get it! I messed up. The incident with Stark--” and Pietro stiffens at the mention of his name, “-I shouldn't have acted the way I did, and really, neither should you.” The chastise earns a frown. “Beside the point, I didn't know...about him, and I apologies.”

“It does not matter,” he dismisses gruffly.

“That's a blatant lie!” you press a little too forcefully, “Ever since then, you've hated the sight of me, but really, I can't blame you--”

“I do not hate you,” he corrects with a hardened tone. You're stupefied momentarily before a broken laugh slips.

“Really?” you ask incredulously, “Cause your behaviour suggests otherwise. And even before the Stark, you have never been remotely happy to see me.”

“You are mistaken,” he insists, moving forward, “I could never hate you.”

Your impaled by the declaration. Flooded with a torrent of confusion, relief, and a sudden spark of embarrassment, but you can't fathom why he wouldn't be.

“How else was I suppose to interpret?”

“I was...frustrated.” The simplicity of the confession doesn't hide his hesitation, but it still wasn't sufficient.

“Frustrated?” you repeat with disbelief. He looks away, face contorting painfully before returning upon you.

“Your aversion to us has been...difficult to understand, despite Wanda's explanations. As time passed you retreated further from us and sought solace alone or with others.” His jaw contracts under the stress. “I was frustrated, yes, but more so at myself: at my inability to control my feelings, to control my desires.”

It's your turn to remain silent post his revelation. He, like his sister, had a mystery air while vocalising and selected his words carefully. You hadn't expected him to be so forthcoming nor how easily you could draw comparisons between yourselves, particularly the robbed sense of freedom. What strikes significantly is that even now, he doesn't fully comprehend the reasons for your actions – for your aversion, as he so described.

“I was just trying to protect myself against what I couldn't understand.” The admission quiet and Pietro's eye soften in kind. It wasn't your intention to inspire guilt so you press forward, drawing closer. “But whatever I did or said, I didn't mean to hurt you and Wanda. It just became so complicated and continued to escalate into this huge fuckin' mess!” At the cuss, Pietro's darkened eyebrows dramatically shot upwards to hide behind his bleached fringe. “What I'm trying to say and I know this is long over-due, but I'm sorry. For everything.”
It was done. You had said you piece, while not eloquently, it was with conviction and sincerity you hope he would accept. Standing but an arms length from one another, you study for a reflection of thought that might predict his verdict.

He's secretive, hiding trace of his forthcoming response but in the sparse second to behold him in the silence, he is tranquil. As he were last night when moonlight graced his silhouette and circumstance provided you with momentary exhibition of an alternative side of himself.

“I accepted your apology last night,” he admits, the soft volume accentuating his accented voice. “Though there was nothing to forgive.”

You're stunned for a second time, staring stupidly at him. It seemed too easy. Last nights exchange had been that of a delirious and blabbering wreck that you were.

And so you say, "I wasn't exactly in my right mind."

"But still you managed generous compliments," he says and you only blink in response.

"...Huh?" Is all you manage. Where was he going-

"You think my hair 'beautiful', no?" his expression serious but you can't mistake the teasing tone.

As the metaphorical cogs of your mind process the comment, in response, the form of a hot flush begins to creep upwards across your neck until it meets your face. Shit. You had hoped that that part had been a delusion of the experience. Apparently not. To deny would be the cowards way!

“I-I think I said pretty." The correction frays against your gritted teeth.

“They but one and the same, no?” The tease is reinforced with a smirk. You note that it was aesthetically pleasing, if infuriatingly so. It suited him.

"Not exactly," your retort while trying to mask the formation of a smile.

There is a thrum of excitement but it serves only to confuse and beg the question: why? The air is infused with a familiar energy and it felt so right. It almost tempts you to push more, exceed the boundaries of your acquaintance with Pietro to discover what else could evolve.

"P.Maximoff and (Y/L/N). You're expected for departure."

Or not. The brief spell is broken, the unidentified voice serving to bring clarity again. Pietro spares an irritated glance outside the glass wall and turns away ending the engagement. He's closed off again. Had it been another missed opportunity? The annoyance is palpable but your positive in ascertaining that for once, you're not the case (not directly at least).

Stepping toward him, your arm extends with hesitant movement. When your hand rests upon his jacket clothed arm, he looks instantly to the act and then to you.

"Hey," you utter quietly.

He registers the questioning tone and answers with a small smile. You realise then that he is more vulnerable, perhaps more than you.

"Your S.H.I.E.L.D is impatient," he says ambiguously. You can't deduce his intended meaning but try to reply as best you can.

"The best of us are." He huffs with acknowledgement while continuing to stare beyond the
observatory. "Come," you encourage, reminiscent of his prompt last night. With a few paces towards the exit, you look back to ensure that he follows. He's staring, the intense kind that he has so frequently done before. It doesn't set your hairs on edge, not like it used to, but still your nerves flutter under the gaze. A moment more and then he's following your path to then open the door and hold it for you.

The industrialised noise meets your ears, drawing focus to the environment around you, but as you walk adjacent to Pietro, the distanced Quinjet your destination, you can't be deterred of one thought. While unspoken, you know that an understanding existed between yourself and him. That being: I'm not asking that we forgive and forgot, but that we just try to understand one another.

For the first time since the beginning of this strange, uncharted future, the stirrings of hope and positivity don't seem unattainable as they once were.

Chapter End Notes

The End.

Nah, just messing with ya!

Holy, bloody cow! I don't dare count the months it has taken to finally complete this! SHIT! There were moments of writers block and progress was nada, but in the final stretch, I persisted and forced this to come to fruition! I admit, I was tempted to edit this further: expand some scenes or rewrite some things, but if I did that, you wouldn't be reading this now. I'm never bloody happy with the end result! GAH! But of course, now I'm fretting over the possibility you guys won't be happy with this chapter. That it wasn't worth the wait!

I swear within the shenanigans of my mind, it all makes sense, but when translated into written work, I'm not sure if what I'm trying to portray is coherent. I worry I explain everything either too much or too little and the reader will get lost and be like, wtf is this?! Let me know if that's the case! And I know this story is dragging its feet but I swear its a necessity! Things will begin moving at a quicker pace next chapter (which I've mentally planned).

I consider chapter 1-5 to be phase one and chapter 6 to be the beginning of phase two. Is there a phase three? I haven't quite figured that out yet.

The biggest and most frustrating hurdle of this chapter was the final scene with Pietro. Fu-ck ME! I rewrote that SO MANY GODDAMN TIMES! And still I'm like, I don't quite like you! So, so, so difficulty. I wanted it to be pure and raw and drawing on Pietro's character to drive it, but my execution feels...meh, to be honest. I find Wanda the easiest to write. Bless you, Wanda. Oh, just to be clear, I have many Cap feels! Many! He is not a villain in any form. The man is just doing his job. I guess the central message of this chapter and the first five as a whole, is about trying to understand and establish effective communication with others. Without it, any relationship or organisation will fail. Pure and simple. Some just don't realise that (how many times did I write 'realise' in this chapter, omg!). So yea. This isn't supposed to be a 'life hack' in the form of fanfiction. Just using everyday factors to support and propel my story.
Aye! I stumbled across the soulmate AU concept while scavenging AO3, and immediately, I loved it. Started brain-storming ideas for a new fic but this idea cemented itself. Am I greedy for wanting both Twins? I don’t bloody care, its gonna be HOT! Pure crank...with a plot...kinda.

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