

Waiting for Me

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Waiting for Me

by [wandering_villains](#)

Summary

When Agent Morrigan Healy is requested to help translate the first Alien contact after the Battle of New York, she's swept into the middle of a 1,000 year battle for domination of the universe. With only her knowledge and wits to help her, she must uncover one of the best-kept secrets in the galaxy all while keeping her own past hidden and her family safe. Will looking death in the eye change her or will she suffer the fate of those who came before her?

Notes

I've had this story stuck in my head for a while. Finally decided to actually put it down and post it. It's my first fic and, I'll be the first to admit, a little self-indulgent. I also don't have a Beta so please let me know if there's anything glaring. I hope some of you enjoy it!

Chapter 1

Fire.

The first thing she realized was that her world was on fire. The flames were fresh and just starting to consume the buildings. She stood in the center of a square, at the epicenter of the explosion. She was untouched unlike everything else in sight. She could feel the heat down to her bones. The smell filled her lungs and she let out a shuddering sigh. She closed her eyes and reached out with her mind. Death filled the void around her. Shaking and swirling like the ash in the air.

Time seemed to stand still. Morrigan stood in the center of her city's square. Ash filled her mouth and lungs as she tried to steady her breathing. Her home was on fire. If she opened her eyes she could see the palace on the hill above the city. She didn't want to look at it though, half of it had been torn away. Fear started to creep up her back. She didn't know how she got here.

She opened her eyes. Morrigan took a stumbling step forward, her breathing labored. She needed to find someone, anyone, to explain to her what happened. She looked all around and saw no one. In fact, despite the mayhem around her she only heard the soft sound of the flames consuming the buildings. There was no crying or screaming. Nothing.

From the corner of her eye, Morrigan saw a man dart in and out of an alley, as if he was checking to see if the coast was clear from whatever had destroyed her home. She turned and started towards the opening of the alley.

"Wait, please. Please" she called out, her voice pleading and thick from the smoke. She fumbled her way to the entrance of the alley and looked for the man who disappeared. The alley was empty. No one was inside and there wasn't anything large enough for a man to hide behind. Fear was winning the fight over control in her mind.

'Where was he? Where's anyone?'

Tears stung her eyes as panic filled her lungs. Morrigan's breathing was coming in short gasps and her hands trembled at her sides. The reality before her didn't make sense. With her mind grappling with what she was seeing, Morrigan fell to her knees. She covered her face, pressing against her eyes to try to stop the tears now flowing down her face.

"Get a hold of yourself!" She chided, wiping her face with the back of her hands. She forced herself to stand, turning back to the town square.

It wasn't empty anymore.

She was surrounded.

It was still silent.

Morrigan eyes went wide as she stared at the gathering before her. They weren't human. She didn't know what they were. The creatures looked like solid smoke trying to look human. Their arms tapered off to points with no hands and their legs were the same. They floated a few inches above the ground like reverse shadows standing before her.

They lingered in the square and stared at her. Or at least she felt that they were staring, they didn't have eyes for her to tell. She felt one of the shadows tilt its head as it looked at her. Her body seized, the muscles all along her back pulling taut. It took one step towards her on uncertain feet. Slowly the shadow picked up the pace and began a jerky half run towards her. The other shadows, sensing the first begin, joined it in their halting run towards her. She was paralyzed. Her mind screamed at her to run but her body couldn't move.

'I know who you are,' a whisper tore through in her mind.

The shadows started running, a dark wave barreling towards her. A stumbling silent mob that was swarming her. The first shadow was feet from her. She raised her arms to protect herself as the shadow barreled into her chest.

Morrigan woke with a start. She sat up in bed, covered in a cold sweat with her heart hammering at an unrelenting pace. The memory of the dream started to drain from her mind. The only thing she could remember was fire and fear. Tears pricked her eyes. Morrigan tried desperately to hold onto what she had seen. Something about it was familiar and yet nothing was. She took a shaky breath and covered her face with her hands. She pressed against her eyes with her palms and looked at the clock by her bed. 4:47. Great. Too late to go back to bed and early enough to be exhausted all day. Morrigan groaned as she fell back onto her pillow. Mondays already suck. This makes it worse.

'Might as well get up now and go in early' Morrigan reasoned with herself. She always did like the solitude of the early morning office. Besides, she had a meeting to present on her new advanced language class for her agents that she could prepare for.

The world slumbered on as Morrigan got ready. Night had not loosened its grip yet and with winter approaching the morning took longer and longer to come. Morrigan still felt the lingering anxiety of the nightmare. She felt suffocated by the darkness still outside. She yearned for the morning to break and provide some comfort in the sunlight. Something had shaken her from the dream. As if it was an awakening and a warning at the same time.

Morrigan took her time getting ready. She showered leisurely and actually took the time to blow out her long hair. Morrigan meticulously applied her makeup and arranged her clothes for the day. Once she was satisfied with the results she went downstairs.

Morrigan's home was small. A townhome with two stories, a decent kitchen, and a small study off the front door where she could meet with clients who needed a translator. She swept down the stairs and proceeded to the kitchen. Coffee before anything else on this unplanned early morning.

With her warm thermos filled, she grabbed her bag and began her trip into work. It wasn't far, a five-minute walk to the train, a twenty-minute train ride and then a ten-minute walk to her office at the Academy. Most days she read on the train or worked on translation jobs on the side. Morrigan had been the lead instructor for the linguist division of Shield for the past five years. There wasn't a language she didn't know and had even spent time working with a field team deciphering a monolith with alien writing on it.

By the end of her train ride, the sun was just starting to peek over the horizon. Morrigan took her time walking in, no need to rush this early in the morning. She felt herself starting to

relax for the first time since her abrupt start to the day. The sun making it feel like the darkness was never there to begin with.

Morrigan made it to her office in record time. She passed her badge over the scanner and walked through the turnstiles into the building. Her office was just down the hall and up a flight of stairs. She dropped her bag and her coat and sat at her desk.

She set about starting her day. Before she knew it a few hours had passed and the office around her came to life. Being near the hustle and bustle of life in the office always made her feel energized, even if she was never directly involved. She was picky over who she shared her little spare time with and made it a rule to never be more than friendly with co-workers.

Morrigan jumped when she heard a knock on her office door. She looked up to see one of the undergraduates waiting patiently for her attention.

"There are two agents here to see you, ma'am. The man says it's urgent." The girl said. There was a glimmer of curiosity in her eyes, no doubt wondering what the urgent need was.

"I'll be right down. Did you get his name and rank?" Morrigan asked as she grabbed her coat.

"No, ma'am. I work part-time in the front office. It seemed important so I came to you right away."

"Thank you, you're dismissed." Morrigan stood and walked around the girl and headed towards the front office.

When she entered the office she saw there were two people waiting for her. A fairly average looking man and a smaller Asian woman. Morrigan approached the two and said, "Hello, I'm Morrigan Healy. I hear you're looking for me."

"I'm Agent Coulson and this is Agent May," The man turned to her and extended a hand which Morrigan took. As he introduced the woman to his left she extending a hand and gave

Morrigan a brief shake. Agent Coulson continued,

"We're here because you come highly recommended. I take it you helped translate a Monolith with one of our field teams a few months back. We're hoping for your assistance today."

Morrigan watched as Agent Coulson reached into a pocket and produced a small recording device. He turned the power on and hit the play button. A male voice drifted out of the machine. It was powerful but it was also soft and lilting at the same time. It sounded almost like he was singing. On impulse, Morrigan reached out and grabbed the device bringing it closer to her ear.

"Now you that heard it. What do you make of it?" Coulson asked reaching out for the device

"Is he speaking Gaelic? Or is it Welsh? I can't really grasp the words," Morrigan asked as she handed the device back.

"How would you approach translating this? Do you hear any words? Phrases?"

"I don't... I- I don't know."

"So what can you tell us?" Agent May snapped, her frown deepening.

"Are you telling me you don't know this language?" Morrigan asked, bewildered. The two agents in front of her exchanged glances.

"Is... is this a transmission? Are we getting First Contact since New York?"

"In a way. Can you translate it?" Coulson asked. Morrigan looked at him, dumbstruck.

"I can tell you that it's impossible to translate from an audio file. I would need to be there to interact with him."

"We thought you'd say that. Come with us."

The next thing she knew Morrigan was swept up into a flurry of activity. Her things were brought to her and she was loaded onto a quinjet with Agent Coulson and Agent May. A folder was pushed into her hands once she was strapped in. It was basically empty. The file contained minimal case notes and it looked like they were heading to Zephyr One. Once aboard they would journey to an undisclosed location.

The trip to Zephyr One took no time at all. Morrigan was ushered off the quinjet and into a laboratory. Her excitement at seeing Zephyr One for the first time muted when she realized she would not be getting a full tour. She looked around the machines and computers and realized the lab was empty. She thought there'd be more people here considering that this was Earth's first non-hostile contact with an alien race. On the table in front of her, she found a pile of note cards and notepads. Taking them and grabbing a pen she started to write up basic ideas for tackling this challenge.

She heard intense arguing coming down the hall. Morrigan couldn't hear words but it sounded like a man and a woman and they were heading her way. The door opposite of her flew open and in walked the arguing couple. Morrigan noted that they looked young. There was no way they were older than she was so they had to be fresh out of the science academy. Morrigan also realized that they were in fact, arguing in English, but it was so complex that she had no idea what they were discussing.

The woman noticed her first, clapping her hands together mimicking a prayer. With an audible gasp, she bounded forward with her hand outstretched. Morrigan took it while the woman enthusiastic spoke.

"You must be Dr. Healy! I'm Jemma Simmons and this is Leopold Fitz."

"Everyone just calls me Fitz. We're glad to have you here doctor," the man said as he stepped around his partner. He held out his hand and Morrigan shook it as well.

“Where are you at so far in translating? Does he seem cooperative?” Morrigan inquired now that introductions were out of the way.

The duo looked at each other for a moment before Fitz launched into the tests they’d run so far.

“From what we can tell there’s no base human language in it. He looks human enough so we are fairly confident that he doesn’t have an abnormal vocal structure from humans. In fact, besides the god awful noise he’s making, he seems human in almost every way. His expressions mimic human emotion almost perfectly. We can tell he’s not upset to be in his cell but actually seems amused by it all if you can believe that.”

Morrigan nodded and asked, “Have you tried teaching him our language?”

Jemma sighed, “We’ve been trying but when we speak with him the women seem to lose all focus and the gentlemen get angry with him. It’s strange. We’ve been trying to also understand how being in his presence changes our agent's behavior.”

Morrigan brought a hand up to rub her face, this was going to be much harder now that there seem to be cognitive issues when interacting with the alien. Taking a deep breath in Morrigan asked, “How have you been going about translating?”

“We’ve been bringing in objects and seeing if he recognizes them and trying to get him to name them. Fitz and I are science but not language experts, that’s why we put in the request to bring you in. You’ve translated, partially at least, a monolith. You’re Shield’s best shot at success.” Jemma said. It was clear that the stress of dealing with an unsuccessful first contact was bothering her.

Morrigan sat down for a moment to think. She rubbed her eyes, thinking of how to bridge the gap with an alien who had no context of earth languages. Slowly an idea formed in her mind. Grabbing a whiteboard marker she started writing down her thoughts.

“So first, we need to make sure that he understands what a question is,”

After writing ‘Why are you here?’ on the whiteboard she continues.

“So the question is 'Why are you here?' Okay, the nature of the question is a request for information. Then, we need to clarify the difference between a specific ‘you’ and a collective ‘you’, because we don’t want to know why Joe Alien is here, we want to know if there's more than just him.

And purpose requires an understanding of intent. We need to find out: does he make conscious choices? Or is his motivation so instinctive that he doesn’t understand a “why” question at all? He might be responding with human reactions but this could just be a survival tactic. And, and biggest of all, we need to have enough vocabulary with him that we understand his answer.”

Capping the marker and setting it down Morrigan turned to look back at the scientists. Fitz looking slightly irritated and Jemma wearing a smug smile.

“Well if it was that easy why didn’t we think of it?” Fitz incredulously asked Jemma.

“That’s because she’s an expert in language and you are not. Come this way, we can take you to him now if you’d like. He’s actually on the ship. We’re not landing as a precaution in case his arrival leaks,” Jemma turns back toward the door she entered, motioning for Morrigan to follow.

Morrigan snagged her notepad and pen as she followed Jemma out the door and into a hall of the ship. Fitz walked beside her. The three chatted about nothing on the way there.

With each step, Morrigan's nerves got a little more pronounced. She knew they said he looked and acted human but what if he didn’t. What if she couldn’t translate his language or worse, what if he was a bad guy? Her stomach clenched at the thought. She never was a fighter despite her upbringing to be one. That’s why she got into the language arts. She could diffuse almost any situation before conflict happened by always knowing the right words to say.

The arrived before she was ready. Two men stood in front of the door to what Morrigan assumed was the alien's holding cell. One of the two was in traditional SWAT gear and the other was just in a black t-shirt and jeans. The man in the jeans watched them approach.

Addressing Jemma he asked, "This your expert?" His tone reminded Morrigan of the guys she met who were in the Cadet Track at the Academy. He looked her over, a frown on his face, a few inches from a scowl.

"Yes, this is Doctor Morrigan Healy. She'll be leading our interactions with our... guest." Jemma seemed to hesitate on saying 'guest'. It looked like they didn't know what to call the alien either.

"Dr. Healy this is Grant Ward. He'll be leading security for you."

Jemma turned her body slightly as she introduced Morrigan. Morrigan stepped forward and held out her hand. Agent Ward looked at it for a second longer than polite before taking it. His hand was noticeably cold and something in his behavior rang alarm bells for Morrigan. She would be happy to have as few encounters with him as she could.

"I take it you'll be wanting to speak with our guest?" Agent Ward asked, earning a nod from Morrigan.

"Okay, there are some safety measures you need to follow. Break any of these and I'll pull you out myself. First, don't touch him. Second, no food or drinks. Third, you will be decontaminated going in and decontaminated going out. Finally, you only have one hour and I'm pulling you out. Any questions?"

"None, sir."

"In that case, follow me," Agent Ward turned and opened the door behind him. It led to a small room with a large glass window. There was a door to the side that opened to a small antechamber that led into the holding area for the alien.

“Is this one-way glass?” Morrigan asked as she entered the room. She looked at Agent Ward who nodded in affirmation. She walked to the glass and was wholly unprepared for what she saw.

He was handsome. More than handsome, he was devastating in his looks. Morrigan watched as he spun a paper cup on the desk. Boredom clear in his posture and expression. His hair was red and swept back. He wore a skin-tight suit in a red and white pattern. As if he could tell she was there, the alien looked up and at the glass just as Morrigan reached the threshold. She watched as he flashed an easy smile and leaned back into the chair. He turned away from the glass and looked towards the door, waiting for someone to enter.

“Am I free to go in?”

“Yes, decontamination takes about 30 seconds,” Jemma answered.

“Don’t breathe in too deeply though,” Fitz muttered under his breath.

Morrigan slowly approached the door, her fingertips brushing the handle. She hesitated. Fear coiled in her stomach, anxiety shunted her breathing. She closed her eyes thinking positive thoughts. An internal mantra built up saying, *‘You can do this. You’ve trained most of your life for this. You are the best at what you do. This is your time now.’*

With a deep breath, Morrigan pushed open the door to the antechamber. The door closing with a solid noise behind her.

The decontamination process was horrible. Morrigan didn't know what was in the mist they coated her in but it smelled like fake sugar cookies mixed with Lysol. Finally, the door to the holding room opened up and Morrigan nearly ran out of the decontamination room.

The door opened easily and Morrigan had to stop it from slamming into the wall. With as much grace as she could muster, she politely closed the door and turned to face her new student.

"You?" The word fell out of his mouth surprising them both. Morrigan stood wide-eyed as she processed the English word that he said. Recognition flashed in his eyes for a moment but as soon as it was there it was gone. For a split second the man's face had gone completely slack.

In an instant, the man's easy smile from before returned. Morrigan couldn't help but join him in the tranquil feeling she had now. Why was she so anxious in the first place? Judging by his behavior he seemed like a fine person.

"I take it they told you I was coming. My name is Morrigan. I'm here to talk with you for a little today," Morgan responded as she sat down. She was relaxed in the chair and watched as the man's eyes looked at her blankly. It was clear he didn't understand a word she said.

"Do you know what I'm saying right now?" Morrigan's question was answered with a dazzling smile. The man tilted his head to one side, while he leaned back again in his chair.

Morrigan brought a hand to her chest saying "Morrigan," she tapped against her chest and added, "Human,"

The man across from her mimicked the same hand motion, touching his chest in time with Morrigan's motions. Morrigan beamed, nodding at his imitation.

"Morrigan," she repeated, laying her hand flat on her chest. The man looked down at his hand, back to Morrigan's face before responding.

He pointed at her and said "Morrigan," he pressed his hand to his own chest, "Eros,"

Morrigan's smile widened. How had she been so concerned? The man across from her seemed so intelligent. At her smile, Eros flashed another one of his own, a bright dazzling smile that caused Morrigan to flush.

Their first meeting was basic. In fact, it was so basic she didn't learn more than his name. Her allotted hour finished before any progress was made. A banging on the door alerted her that time was up. She tried gesturing to Eros that she would return and gave him a quick goodbye, leaving some of her items behind.

Decontamination was just as horrible the second time. After exiting the antechamber she was met with what she assumed was the whole team. Coulson was at the center and he looked intense as Morrigan entered the room.

"I see you at least got a name. How did it go? How do you feel?"

"I did get a name and I feel fine. I think it went as well as a first encounter could considering I only had an hour. You'll have to give me more time for this to work."

Coulson nodded and turned to Jemma and Fitz.

"Where are you at on a possible outbreak? Should we still be worried about an outbreak?"

"Considering what little we know it's hard to say. I don't think there's a risk in extending the time slowly and monitoring reactions. We still don't know if the feelings people get are a chemical or some other type of defense system." Jemma answered. Coulson nodded again and added,

"We'll start extending the time in 15-minute increments. Should FitzSimmons think something is wrong we'll go back to square one. I want this done right so no skipping steps. Understood?"

The group gave their affirmative and Morrigan was swept away by the science duo to strategize the next session with Eros. Morrigan watched him as the group pulled her away and she could have sworn he gave her a slight wave as she left out of sight.

With the help of FitzSimmons, Morrigan launched into her work. She used flash cards and images to help Eros learn English and in turn, Eros taught her the words of his strange language. It was exhilarating for Morrigan to work through the process of understanding this new language. With each step forward she found herself leaning into him, intoxicated by the challenge. Intoxicated by him. She felt a connection driving her to find out as much about him as she could.

As weeks passed, Morrigan continued with her English lessons. Eros learned faster than any other student she'd taught before. Within two weeks he was forming his own basic sentences. From his small vocabulary, Morrigan was able to figure out more about him. Eros was a refugee, traveling from planet to planet before he came to Earth. Upon landing something had broken on his ship, this resulted in him wandering to the closest city in search of repair items. Unfortunately, he happened upon a small town where his presence was immediately reported which explained how he ended up in Shield's custody.

In their time together Morrigan learned as much of his language as she could. There was a musicality to it that she loved. Morrigan thought that this is how all language should be, flowing and free with the additional melody to it to further intensify its meaning. It sounded almost like a song when spoken fluently. She hadn't had a new language that challenged her in years and the complexity of Eros' native language was intoxicating in its excitement.

She and Eros were together on most days. The decontamination process eventually stopped once they were certain no virus or plague would infect the crew. It became an easy relationship between student and mentor, the roles reversing depending on who was learning. Morrigan would spend her days and most of her evenings with Eros. They built a comfortable companionship together and Morrigan felt a joy that she hadn't had in ages.

Before she knew it nearly a month had passed. Eros continued to develop at an amazing level. He had reached milestones that most people wouldn't reach without months or years of work.

With the fear of an outbreak lifted Eros joined the crew for meals though he still spent most of his time in his small chamber. He didn't seem to mind the constant attention. In fact, Morrigan had to guess that on some level, he enjoyed it.

Afternoon sessions became her favorite time. Morrigan usually reserved the mornings for grammar and syntax but afternoons she kept free to just talk. Encouraging Eros to learn the

functionality of the language, not just its rules. The sessions were normal. They joked and laughed. Eros tried to teach Morrigan a small nursery rhyme from his homeworld. As an afternoon session was ending, Morrigan went to clean up her supply of markers and worksheets so they could walk to dinner together. She started collecting her things when Eros' hand flashed out and grabbed her wrist.

The usual warmth she had with him melted at the contact. Morrigan, panicked, pulled on her wrist to get loose. It was useless, she looked at his eyes and was frozen in place from the look Eros was giving her. It felt as though her whole body was paralyzed from fright.

His gaze was cold, piercing and appraising. He looked completely different from the man he was a moment ago. He looked at her like he had found a particularly unappealing bug in his garden. He held her gaze for a moment longer and, just as suddenly as it happened, he let go. He sat back in his chair and smiled at Morrigan again.

Morrigan reeled back, holding her wrist against her chest. She knew she needed to get out of there... But did she really need to leave? That had to have been her imagination playing tricks. Eros had been nothing but hesitant and gentle in all of his interactions so far. She had to have made up him grabbing her. It had to have been her imagination fueled by being gone from home for so long. Morrigan gave Eros a reassuring smile and picked up the last of her things.

"You ready?"

Eros looked at her and smiled genially. He stood and opened the door, holding it so she could pass through.

Two days passed when Coulson called her into his meeting room on the Zephyr One.

"They need you back at the Academy," Coulson informed her once they were both seated. Morrigan stiffened, she was not ready to leave Eros in the hands of some unknown agent.

"You can't send me back now. I am the only one he trusts and there's still so much that he needs to develop. You're going to stick your best linguist in a classroom while-"

Holding a hand up, Coulson cut her off.

"You don't think I'm aware? This order came from the top down and we're all supposed to be team players. I was told to send you back and I tried fighting it myself. I even offered to bring you onto my team but it didn't fly. They say you can't leave your classes for this long. There's a possibility of returning if a replacement is found or once the semester has ended."

Morrigan opened her mouth to argue further when Coulson added "This isn't a discussion. We're landing in thirty, a car will take you home from the office."

Morrigan knew when orders were orders. She stood, shook Coulson's hand and left for her temporary lodging to pack. She didn't have much so clearing her cabin of belongings took much less time than she thought. Sitting on her bed Morrigan reviewed the notes she had taken.

To say she was disappointed was an understatement. She hardly knew more than an infant would of Eros' vocabulary. She didn't even know what the language looked like in writing. They'd barely scratched the surface of what could be learned. Morrigan threw herself back on the bunk, frustration tensing her shoulders. She tried relaxing them but couldn't seem to stay calm enough for that yet. A soft tapping from her door broke her train of thought.

"Who is it?" she called out miserably from her bunk.

"Eros."

Bolting upright Morrigan launched herself at the door. Throwing it open she saw Eros leaning casually on the door frame. The same comfortable feeling filled her again at seeing him.

"I didn't think I'd get a chance to say goodbye! They're sending me home now," she sighed, stepping up to where he was in the doorway.

Eros smiled as he spoke, "I wanted to say thank you. You've been working so hard on learning my language and teaching me yours."

Eros reached out and grabbed Morrigan's hand. He bowed slightly and lightly kissed the top of each hand. Morrigan felt the blush rush from her chest up and over her face. Her hands clutched his as he stood back up. Eros blessed her with another dazzling smile. Morrigan felt her mind go soft, her skin tingling. She wanted nothing more than to be wrapped up in him for the rest of her life.

"You shine too bright for men to gaze upon and I thank you for the opportunity to covet you from the shade you cast. I don't know if I will see you again but I will treasure the moments you have given me."

Eros' voice was like honey over velvet and Morrigan felt herself leaning into him as he spoke. He looked at her as she pressed against his chest, a smirk wide on his face. He squeezed her hands briefly, turned and walked down the hall out of sight.

Morrigan stood in the doorway, hands still up from where Eros let go. Something was trying to click together as her mind solidified after being thoroughly turned to mush. That was one hell of a goodbye. She looked down the hall, hoping he would return.

"Dr. Healy? We're ready for you."

Coulson's voice broke the spell in the air and Morrigan mentally shook herself. She had behaved rashly and needed to pull herself together.

"Thank you, Coulson, let me grab my things."

Dashing back into the room Morrigan grabbed her bag and followed Coulson down the hall to the quinjet. The flight was uneventful. Morrigan worked on her briefing notes and her file for submission. The anger at being told to leave had burned itself out. She was resigned to the fact that she would be back at her desk and some upper-level agent would pick up where she left off. She mostly felt sad. She could have taught Eros so much more and, in turn, learned more of his language as well. He had so much potential left.

A few hours later Morrigan was home. It seemed like everything that happened on Zephyr One was from another life. Morrigan started slowly putting her things away when her flash card fluttered out of her bag and onto the floor. She reached for it, smiling as she remembered her last lesson. She had wanted to start reading books together since Eros had made such progress. He was at least at a middle school level for comprehension. Morrigan paused. Realization striking her out of nowhere. She felt like someone had poured ice all over her. She thought back to her goodbye with Eros. The way he spoke to her, the things he said. She had never taught him that.

Chapter Two

Chapter Notes

Shorter chapter than before but I wanted to update. I hope you enjoy it as much as I am finally putting this story down. <3

Morrigan had never been the sort to say that she wanted excitement in her life. Things were fine the way they were. She had no desire to be at the center of what was happening or to be the big player in the room. Her siblings were a part of that and made it clear that she wouldn't be welcome. Every family has their differences and when the opportunity came Morrigan left home and that life when she was 14. She wanted to be normal. To live a life of service, speaking for those who didn't have a voice of their own.

All of the excitement working with Eros changed something in her. She felt-- needed. That her actions had consequence. She felt influential. She'd never planned on being so directly involved in a project that had such high stakes. It was like the first hit of a drug so powerful she knew she would be searching for the next high, even though her situation would prevent her from being in the room where things happen.

These thoughts were like a weight tied to her heart. Thoughts swirled in Morrigan's head, threatening to drown her as she walked into her house. The car from Shield had dropped her off and didn't even wait for her to get inside.

For a moment she was someone and now it was back to fading into the background. Just another agent teaching at the academy. This is the life she chose and she would need to accept that and be proud of the little she'd done.

Morrigan pushed her way through the front door and set her things down in the entry. The darkness of the house loomed before her and the stale smell of an unlived-in home clung to the air. With a heavy sigh, Morrigan started to bring her luggage upstairs to begin the process of unpacking. Her practical nature told her to start unpacking as soon as she set her bag down.

'Start putting things away, you know you feel better after you clean,' The voice in her head urged her. However, the weight of her feelings was so much that she felt rooted to the floor. All Morrigan wanted to do was sink down and sleep. She looked at the watch on her wrist and sighed. It was late, well past ten o'clock.

'Put things away in the morning, you'll have all weekend to be productive. Be sad for now,' a second voice cooed. Morrigan eyed her bed. The bed she'd missed for weeks.

A little rest won't hurt, she thought as she lied down on the bed. Just rest for thirty minutes then you can be responsible. Morrigan closed her eyes and stretched, ready to rest and be ready for work come Monday.

The hallway in front of her was dark. Morrigan couldn't quite remember how she got there and definitely didn't know where she was going. She looked behind her and saw the hallway stretching out behind her the same way it stretched out before her. A look to the right and the left confirmed that there weren't any doors. Just more of the dark grey industrial walls around her. With nothing else to do Morrigan started walking forward again.

The hallway seemed to go on forever but Morrigan never felt tired or worried. In fact, it felt comfortable and easy being there. She continued walking, for how long she couldn't say.

Finally, Morrigan saw an end to the hallway. She quickened her steps to reach the T intersection and looked around again. To her left was a door with no light coming out from inside and to her right was an archway that had light at the end. Deciding to go with the option with more light Morrigan turned down the archway and found herself in a large open room.

The room was massive. The ceiling was high, easily three or four stories up and a half a football field wide. The path in front of Morrigan narrowed to a walkway surrounded by water. As she walked further in she noticed that the water wasn't making any noise, despite it moving around in the pools. The silence wasn't oppressive. Morrigan actually found comfort in how still the room felt. Taking her eyes away from the water and the expansive ceiling Morrigan continued to look around the room.

Right in the center of the water, in the center of the room, was a throne. How she had missed it when she first entered she wasn't sure. It was a dominating feature in the space. Large, angular and set upon a flight of stairs it was clearly meant for someone of prestige. Morrigan felt a pull to get closer. Her feet carried her to the foot of the stairs. The throne was enormous. Morrigan felt dwarfed by its size.

'I've never seen anything like this,' Morrigan mused to herself as she ascended the stairs. She reached with her hand and let her fingertips brush the arm of the throne. It was a rough-hewn stone and it was frigid. Morrigan couldn't fathom who would want a throne as imposing and cold as this one.

Loud, echoing footsteps entered the room behind Morrigan. With her heart jackhammering in her throat, Morrigan spun quickly on her heel to see who was coming into the chamber. The footsteps stopped as soon as she turned.

Despite hearing the footsteps of someone approaching there was no one in the room with her. She scoured the room looking for the person who entered. Whoever it was had to have been massive to create the sound Morrigan heard. She frantically looked all around but there was no one there and no place for anyone to hide.

"I know you're in here. There isn't any use hiding from me,"

A baritone voice boomed from a few feet away and down the platform from Morrigan. She clamped her hands over her mouth to stifle her yelp. From the sound of the voice, Morrigan could see a hazy shape of a man, though it was easily the largest person she'd ever encountered.

'I'm plane walking!' The realization struck Morrigan with panic. She wasn't supposed to plane walk, her magic was supposed to be repressed. She needed to leave. Now.

Ducking to the side of the throne Morrigan inhaled as quietly as she could. Squeezing her eyes shut she reached out with her consciousness to find her tether; her lifeline to find her way back home. She found it quickly and started pulling herself back. From what she remembered it took about ten seconds to fully leave the dimension.

The footsteps moved closer.

Ten.

They started up the stairs.

Nine.

Morrigan stopped breathing.

Eight.

The figure stood right in front of her.

Seven.

She could feel him looking around for her

Six.

The figure in front of her knelt down. Morrigan stifled a sob.

Five.

"Why are you hiding little one?"

Four.

The man reached out his hand.

Three.

His hand was inches from her face.

Two.

His fingers brushed her chin.

One.

His massive hand cupped her face as Morrigan felt her astral body being flung back home.

Morrigan gasped and hurtled herself out of bed, barreling towards the bathroom. Racing in she collapsed onto the floor, sobbing as she tried to keep down the bile creeping up her throat. Pure panic filled her as she processed the magnitude of what she'd unconsciously done.

Magic was denied to her. She had to keep herself under control or risk exposing her family. As the shakes started to pass, she knelt up to the counter and reached for her medicine. She looked at her packet and staring right back at her was her nightly dose. She'd forgotten to take it. She looked hard at herself in the mirror. She looked as awful as she felt.

Her hazel eyes were bloodshot and swollen, making her pallor skin look even more deathlike than normal. Her dark hair crushed on one side where she had been sleeping. Standing up Morrigan rubbed her eyes with her fingertips. She sighed into her hands and turned the faucet on, splashing water onto her already tear stained face.

Maybe this was all a terrible dream.

Looking at herself again and seeing the exhaustion written all over it she knew it wasn't a nightmare, it was real.

Morrigan popped the small white pill into her mouth and dry swallowed it. It wouldn't reverse what happened but it would prevent another accident. She couldn't afford another slip. She needed to alert her family.

Morrigan willed herself to move and shuffled back to her bedroom. She grabbed the phone on her nightstand and looked at her notifications. Four texts and five missed calls, most of them from her grandmother, Evelyn.

TEXT FROM GRAM AT 11:47 PM: 'Sweetheart are you alright? We just got a ping on our radar'

MISSED CALL FROM GRAM 11:48 PM

MISSED CALL FROM GRAM 11:50 PM

MISSED CALL FROM GRAM 11:52 PM

TEXT FROM GRAM AT 11:54 PM: 'Honey? Please answer my calls, Misha'

MISSED CALL FROM GRAM 11:55 PM

TEXT FROM GRAM AT 11:58 PM: 'Honey, it's going to be okay. You need to get back to me though.'

MISSED CALL FROM LIZ 11:59 PM

TEXT FROM LIZ AT 11:59 PM: 'Morrigan, you must respond to your contact or we will be forced to send a unit to you. Please advise by 12:05 AM'

Morrigan wiped her tears from her face and responded to Liz first.

TEXT TO LIZ: 'Situation managed. Do not respond. Do not risk another ping on radar. Calling contact now.'

Immediately after pressing send Morrigan called her grandmother back. The phone didn't even ring before Evelyn answered.

"Honey is that you?"

"Hi Gram," Morrigan's voice broke as she answered, "Yeah it's me. I'm okay. I'm just so sorry,"

Morrigan hiccuped and started gulping breaths trying to stay calm but hearing her grandmother sounding so concerned was breaking her.

"Oh Misha, it is okay. Take a deep breath in for me and I want you to hold it. Listen to me, okay?"

"Gram everyone is in danger, I-" Morrigan was cut off by her grandmother's tutting.

"The first thing I want to tell you is that whatever you did was very small. We hardly registered it which is why I called and texted rather than have the whole army come get you." Morrigan nodded in silence as tears streamed down her face.

"Second is that I love you and I know you would not do anything to hurt the family or your people. So, take another breath and tell me what happened,"

Morrigan sat on the floor with her back against the bed and tucked her head onto her knees. She felt exhausted.

"I," Morrigan paused, forcing herself to calm down, "I plane walked Gram," She took a deep breath and continued.

"I don't know where I went. It was huge, maybe dimensional giants? I don't know, gods... and it was mostly empty. It wasn't a strong projection, I couldn't be seen but I guess you could hear me. There was someone there. He heard me and tried to find me. He has to know magic as well, he was in shadow the whole time. Gram. He touched me. I didn't think you could do that when plane walking,"

"He touched you?"

"Yeah, on my cheek. I was hiding and he crouched in front of me and he touched my cheek,"

Silence.

"Gram?"

“It’s okay Misha,” Evelyn murmured, “I do not know what or who this was but from all of our analysis we do not think it created much more of a ripple than a drop of water. The Sorcerer did not notice and waved us off when we alerted them,”

“For now, rest. The Conclave will want a report sometime tomorrow. Rest and in the morning we will start looking into what happened. Okay, Misha?”

“Yeah Gram, okay.”

“Is breá liom tú.”

“I love you too. Night”

Morrigan hung up the phone and threw her head back against the bed. Sleep was not going to come as easily as her grandmother clearly thought it would. The bright red of her bedside clock mocked her with its early hour. Morrigan plugged her phone back in and wandered downstairs.

She hadn’t had an episode in over a decade. She’d always been so precise in her medication timing. Why did she forget now? She chastised herself all the way to the kitchen. She busied herself with making a cup of sleepy time tea. Hoping that repeating her nightly ritual would help her sleep.

She fixed up her tea just so, a tiny drop of honey and a splash of cream, and settled into the couch. She turned on her TV in the hope of finding something that would let her fall asleep. She settled with a period drama about a noble family in England. They had such frivolous issues and the show had an overall positive feeling. Morrigan pulled a blanket over herself and forced her body to relax.

She didn’t pay much attention to the show but it was enough of a distraction to quiet the chaos in her mind. Gradually she felt her heartbeat slow, her shoulders fell and her back relaxed. She unconsciously wiggled deeper into the covers and felt her eyes start to get heavy after a few episodes had finished.

Morrigan drifted to a near doze, the television noise just a soft part of the background. Curled on the couch, Morrigan turned her head to fall asleep. Through sleepy eyes, she looked across her living room and right at the hazy shape of an enormous man in her kitchen.

Bolting upright, Morrigan threw her teacup at the figure. As the cup shattered upon impact, she bolted for the front door where her work bag, and handgun, were located. She flipped on the light, unholstering the concealed weapon, aiming at the figure in her kitchen. Adrenaline rushed through her system again as her eyes sought her target.

Her kitchen was empty.

Keeping her gun at the ready Morrigan sidestepped into her kitchen. It really was empty. A creature of that size couldn’t have moved that quickly or become that small in the seconds after she saw it. Her teacup was in pieces all over the floor. Morrigan, keeping her weapon ready, started searching her house.

Starting with a sweep of her patio backyard Morrigan combed through her house. She meticulously checked each corner of her home. Adrenaline fueling her steps and fear curdling her stomach. She cleared the downstairs and continued her search upstairs. She eased up her stairs, knowing full well that one wrong step would cause the stairs to creak. Her guest bedroom was empty, as was her bathroom. She slowly eased her bedroom door open, this was the last room to clear. She crept in, gun at the ready. Her eyes swept the room. She quickly checked her blind corners and kept her back to the wall. Opening the closet, she quickly assessed that no one was in there either.

Morrigan shuttered out a breath she didn't realize she'd been holding. Her arm relaxed and she held her gun to her side. There was no one in her house. She must have had a nightmare from the stress of the evening. Taking her left hand she rubbed her eyes and moved to sit on the bed. She groaned at the exhaustion that was left after the adrenaline had faded. Glancing at the clock she realized it was the early hours of the morning and that she probably wouldn't get any sleep.

As her eyes moved from the clock she noticed something was on her pillow. Reaching for the light Morrigan refused to look away from the foreign object, praying it was something she forgot she left. Flipping the switch on the lamp on her bedside table, light illuminated the room.

Sitting on her pillow was a lone flower. Morrigan had never seen anything like it. It resembled a peony, except it was huge. The bloom alone was nearly the size of her head. The color was a deep oxblood red with veins of black running through the petals, the stem a light lavender. It was beautiful. It was horrifying.

Morrigan stood at the edge of the bed, ice running through her veins. She fumbled for her phone on the bedside table. Without taking her eyes off the flower she dialed her phone. Bringing the device to her ear she prayed the call would be answered. She heard the click of the line being opened.

“Gram? Can I stay with you for the weekend?”

Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

To everyone following my story, I'm so sorry it's taken so long to update. Work has been crazy and I've been out of the country for a few weeks. I'm hoping to get into a regular schedule of posting every two to three weeks. Thank you to anyone who reads this! <3

“The Conclave does not concern itself with some nightmare from a Dezzati.”

Morrigan flinched at the name. Her cousin, Sabina was just wrapping up a verbal beating and seemed to have no intention of pulling any punches. Morrigan may have left home but she was not a deserter to her family. A Dezzati was someone who abandoned the Akari, her people, usually in a vengeful or spiteful manner.

“The fact that we even held Council with you is the minimum required. Your *‘episode’* was hardly consequential but regulation dictates we speak with you.”

Morrigan bristled. She knew what she experienced was real. At her side, her grandmother gently squeezed her hand that she was holding. Evelyn was one of the strongest magic users Morrigan knew, that strength was showcased now as she was projecting both of them for the Conclave. The squeeze was a reminder of her place.

Council meetings were held with astral projections of those who could not be at the Akari capital, Ocardoch. Six of the fifteen Conclave members were present at the Council, the others hadn't shown up. They didn't even have a quorum.

‘They really think I’m making this up.’ The flower Morrigan had found withered faster than any flower she'd seen on Earth. It was basically dust in a few hours and had shrunk so much that it looked like a normal peony at this point, albeit a dried out one. She and her grandmother decided it was best not to bring it up because of its decay. Morrigan was now wondering if that was the smartest choice.

“I don't know why you are so harsh with her Sabina. I believe she truly saw something.” The voice startled Morrigan. It was a voice she hadn't heard in years. It was the voice of Evie, her twin sister. She was not originally in the Council and must have recently arrived.

Her projection appeared in front of Morrigan as if she were walking into a spotlight. She was everything Morrigan wasn't. She shone like a light in the darkness, her bright green eyes always dancing with hidden laughter while Morrigan's hazel eyes always seemed muddled and solemn. Her shining blonde hair always in a glamorous wave and everything about her screamed fashion. Morrigan worked hard to blend in as much as possible and counted it a miracle if her hair was anything more than straight and plastered to her head. Evie's skin was

always glowing and sun-kissed. She always looked so much more alive than Morrigan and with her powers it made sense.

Evie was Life. More than just the life of the party, she was her people's embodiment of Life and the Soul of the Akari. Morrigan remembered the looks on her parents' faces when Evie started showing her powers. They were so... proud. A look Morrigan didn't get as often as her sister.

To know Evie was to love her, even for Morrigan. She loved her sister more than anything in her life. Seeing her after years apart was like walking into unexpected sunshine. The situation seemed brighter with Evie in it.

"Hi Evie," Morrigan stared at her sister's image. "It's been a minute,"

Evie smiled gently at Morrigan before addressing the Council again.

"We all know my sister's sacrifice for our people. She's removed herself from our community for the protection and safety of all. She's agreed to cut herself off from the magic in all of us, a sacrifice you know nothing about."

Morrigan dropped her head at her sister's words. She had not expected support from her, not at this level.

"Morrigan is trustworthy. What I want to know is how this happened in the first place. For over a decade Morrigan has been religious about the medication to control her magic. After many years, a single missed dose shouldn't have caused this. Judging by the size of the magic used Morrigan didn't travel far. The reality is she either was welcomed and pulled to the location or some Terran is having very odd dreams. Either of which should give the Conclave pause,"

Evie looked around to each of the six Conclave members in attendance. A few looked away and some even had the grace to look embarrassed. Sabina crossed her arms and maintained eye contact until Evie looked away. Turning to Morrigan at last, Evie continued.

"My sister, please continue to do what you have been all these years. The Conclave will continue to monitor for abnormalities. Keep yourself out of trouble?"

"Always."

"Good, then I think we can end this Council meeting."

"Who made you Empress Evie?" Sabina whispered so softly Morrigan was surprised she heard her. Evie herself didn't notice, or if she did she made no acknowledgment of it. Evie raised her hand to her heart and bowed out of the meeting, her astral projection fading from view. The remaining Conclave members followed behind until Morrigan was alone with her grandmother again.

Releasing Morrigan's hand with a grunt, Evelyn plopped down onto a sitting chair in her living room.

Morrigan had arrived at her grandmother's home in the early hours of Saturday morning and had been there since. Morrigan always loved her grandmother's house. It felt like home. The furniture was cozy and picture frames lined all of the walls. They were all pictures of her family or landscapes from Ocardoch. A small groan escaped Evelyn as she stretched her legs out in front of her.

"It becomes harder and harder to use the magic every day," she grumbled, hands folding on her lap. Morrigan looked at her grandmother and saw the age on her face. She was getting tired.

"I'll make some tea Gram," Morrigan touched her grandmother's shoulder as she passed by on her way to the kitchen. She brought the kettle to boil and made up two cups. It was Sunday, she needed to return to work and her own home tomorrow. A thought she had avoided all weekend.

Rationally, Morrigan knew that the vision in her home was just a nightmare. She'd accepted that her runaway imagination as playing a cruel trick on her. The flower though... that she couldn't explain away but even with the small amount of time that passed it was harder for Morrigan to accept what she saw.

It's no wonder the Conclave thought she was lying. There really wasn't an explanation for what happened and even less of a reason for a group as powerful as them to be worried. Morrigan tried again to release the worry and anxiety, working on her breathing while the tea steeped.

Once the cups were prepared, cream for her and honey for her grandmother, Morrigan returned to the living room. She set a cup in front of her grandmother and sat in the chair opposite her. The pair sipped in silence. The earlier meeting consuming both of their thoughts.

"Are you going home tonight?" Evelyn asked, quirked an eyebrow at her granddaughter.

"I need to. I go back to the office tomorrow and I don't want an hour and a half commute," Morrigan grimaced. She didn't want to be alone but with the Conclave decision to just monitor the situation she needed to move on with her life.

Morrigan and her grandmother talked more about the meeting, the dream and everything in between. It had been their main topic of conversation all weekend. Eventually, the afternoon started to move towards evening and Morrigan knew it was time to leave. Stretching as she stood, Morrigan groaned as she set about collecting her things from her unexpected weekend visit. Once everything was gathered, Evelyn walked her outside.

The Akari were not people who prolonged goodbyes. When she left her home at fourteen she only had minutes to say goodbye to her entire race.

Leaving her grandmother's home after a weekend trip would warrant nothing more than a few words. Morrigan turned with her bag in her hands and trouble in her heart. Something told her that this might be the last time she saw both the house and her grandmother. She could hear her grandmother chiding her already.

'Stop wasting time on tears, Misha!' she would say, hands wiping tears and little pushes towards the car. So instead of the goodbye worth the emotions building in her heart, Morrigan hugged her grandmother tightly, murmured a goodbye, got into the car and pulled out of the driveway.

After a quick drive, Morrigan looked up at her home. It was dark outside and inside. She knew she needed to go in but fear rooted her to the ground. How long she stood outside of her own house Morrigan couldn't say. Eventually, she summoned enough courage to open the front door.

Everything was how she had left it. The couch still had a rumpled blanket, the teacup was still shattered on the floor and her bags from her work trip with Eros were still laying on the floor. With a heavy sigh, Morrigan started the process of putting things back in place.

Once the house was back in order Morrigan climbed into her comfy clothes and slid into bed. She was ready to sleep in her own bed again and she knew this first night would be the hardest. She had triple checked that she had taken her medication and took a sleeping medicine just in case. Grabbing a stack of papers on her bedside table Morrigan graded a few essays from her students while she waited for the sleep aid to work. Slowly her eyes became heavy and she let herself slip into a quiet, dreamless sleep.

Morrigan awoke the next morning feeling more like herself than she'd felt for the past few days. Things finally started to feel normal again and her routines came back to her as if she'd never left.

While in full-term, Morrigan's workdays flew by. She lectured, held office hours and submitted her reports regarding Eros on time. Her students were happy to have her back and, if she was honest with herself, she was happy to be back too. The normal pace of her day to day helped calm the worry that had invaded her mind from the lapse in her medication. After a few days, the stress from the episode melted away. Everything was back to normal.

Except... there were moments when she felt like she was being watched. Walking to the train station had her checking over her shoulder for someone following her. Morrigan felt eyes on her as she would enter her home. She would find herself feeling self-conscious on morning runs. Morrigan nearly pulled her weapon on a poor man who asked her for directions on her way home.

Everything appeared to be right in her world except that everything felt off. Like someone had shifted everything she had just an inch or two to the left. It seemed to be in the right place but it was just... wrong.

Two weeks passed with Morrigan bouncing between feelings of panic and feeling like everything had settled. She was walking up the stairs in front of her building at work when she felt the eyes on her again. She spun, ready and certain she would see who was spying on her. Her eyes frantically searched behind her, her hand clenching white on her handbag.

"Dr. Healy?"

Morrigan turned slowly to the voice that called out behind her.

'This is it,' she thought, her body ready to fight the foe that had been relentlessly stalking her for weeks.

"Oh my god, Director Fury!" Morrigan gasped, placing a hand over her heart. She had been so sure that this was it.

"How can I be of assistance, sir? This isn't your usual office," Morrigan worked on regaining her composure and tried smiling at the director. The director didn't share her joking and Morrigan was greeted with a leveled expression.

"Rumor has it you were a valuable asset with our mutual out of town guest," The director crossed his arms, looking down at her with an intense look, "Any new freelance clients come your way from our friend?"

Morrigan knitted her brows. Something was going on and she didn't like the feeling she was getting.

"Sir, I'm afraid I'm missing something here. I don't have 'freelance' clients, I support my community as part of my outreach program with the Academy. All interactions are approved by Shield,"

Fury's expression didn't change, he clearly suspected her of something. Morrigan shifted her hold on her bag, uncomfortable with the intensity the director was giving her.

"Has something happened sir?" Morrigan asked, tentatively trying to gain some level of even footing with a man who was far and above her superior.

"I'm going to need you to come with me Doctor," and in an instant, he was gone.

Fury didn't wait to see if Morrigan would follow. He turned on his heel and walked right into the building behind him. Morrigan followed in a half run to catch up. Thanks to her long legs it didn't take long for her to catch up with him.

She thought about trying to break the tension with a joke, or a question. Morrigan stole a glance at the director and his stony expression on his face caused the words to die on her lips, silence seemed to be her only option.

After following Fury for a few minutes Morrigan realized they were walking to the airstrip. When the pair stepped outside there was a Quinjet already warmed up and ready to take off.

'Looks like another trip for me,' Morrigan thought as she continued to follow the director into the aircraft. Morrigan noticed that there were far fewer people on this Quinjet than when she'd left with Agent Coulson.

"Sit," Director Fury instructed. Morrigan shoved her bag under the flight seat and buckled up.

The pair flew for hours. Morrigan had no idea what was happening or why she was being whisked away again. The director didn't feel the need to fill the silence either. Morrigan could tell something was happening. Fury played it off cool but something had him rattled.

After what felt like an eternity later the Quinjet touched down. After getting a nod of approval Morrigan undid her buckles and grabbed her few things. She fell in step with the director again as he left the aircraft.

Morrigan anticipated being brought to one of the other Shield buildings or at the very least a military compound. Throughout her career at Shield she never rocked the boat, but from the director's behavior, it was clear that she was in some sort of trouble. She didn't know how Shield took care of problematic agents. With all of her anxiety, she expected to be met with military police. Whatever was happening was a big deal if Director Fury himself escorted her here... Wherever here was.

What she did not expect was to see was a sleek compound in the middle of a forest. The sun was up and the light reflecting off the building made it feel like it was glittering. The sleek lines gave the building a modern and expensive feeling. Together the two walked up to the building. Fury held the door open as Morrigan continued to try and take in as much of the building as possible. Her head up and looking all around. In her study of the building, she drifted into the main room before running into a wall. Or at least, what she thought was a wall.

"Easy now," a man grabbed her shoulders to steady her.

"Holy shit Captain America!" Morrigan quickly covered her mouth with her free hand, mortified at her reaction. Never in her life did she expect to be standing in front of the living legend himself. His hands were on her shoulders, keeping her from tripping over herself further.

"Language!" A voice from behind the Captain called out.

Morrigan felt her neck twinge in protest with how quickly she strained it to see who had spoken behind Captain America. Her neck injury was justified when she saw Tony Stark walking into the main lobby from one of the adjoining rooms. If he hand wasn't already over her mouth Morrigan was sure she would have said something to further confirm that she was an idiot.

"I'm sure you know who these two are?" Director Fury asked from behind her.

"Yes, sir, I do. It's a pleasure to meet you both," Morrigan stuck out her hand to the Captain first. She had to fight the urge to stare at him. Morrigan had seen posters and watched all of the video training from the attack on New York however all of these paled in comparison to the real man. Fury spoke again as Morrigan was shaking Tony's hand.

"So I don't need to tell you that if they're involved this is serious,"

"I hope I have enough sense to see that. What's happening?" Morrigan's mind was running a mile a minute. Why would they need her? They were the Avengers and she was just a

translator, she didn't fight in wars or battles.

"Well, we were hoping you could tell us. If you could follow us this way," Captain America gestured further into the building. He and Ironman led the way with Morrigan and Director Fury steps behind them.

"We heard about your experience with Eros Dr. Healy. From what we've been told you handled everything well and he's integrating into Earth with the help of the Agent's he's working with," Captain continued as they walked.

"I was pulled from that assignment, if you want my debrief I turned that in weeks ago," Morrigan stuttered. She still was trying to wrap her head around the fact that she was with the Avengers.

"Oh, we know that this isn't about him though," Tony interjected, looking at Morrigan over his shoulder. "Got any other space friends you want to tell us about?"

"You keep asking that and I don't understand what you're asking of me," Morrigan felt like she was only getting half of the story, that they were actually investigating her. That they didn't need her at all.

They reached a door deep within the complex. There was nothing out of the ordinary about it. The two Avengers stood in front of it while Tony entered a passcode, unlocking the door. Steve pulled the door open and held it for Morrigan to enter.

'Something is in there.' Morrigan clasped her hands in front of her to hide her shaking. She did not want to go in there. As if he could read her thoughts, Steve caught her eye and gave her a smile and a tiny nod. Morrigan held her breath, gave a nod back and entered the room.

It was a very, very plain office. A desk with a computer was in front of her, as well as enough chairs for everyone to sit. Besides a large TV was on the wall to the left the room was bare of any decorations.

Tony had already entered the room and was leaning against the desk, his arms crossed in front of him. He oozed the energy of the billionaire playboy he was. He reminded Morrigan of her sister Evie, always the cool one, the one with the funny lines and the one who would save the day when necessary.

"So Doctor, you sure you don't have any new friends you want to tell us about?" Tony drawled as Morrigan took her seat.

"I mean no disrespect, sir." Morrigan looked at the director with a leveled expression. "Is this an interrogation? Because I really have no idea what you're talking about,"

"Tell her Tony," Captain Rogers had taken post near the TV. He and Tony exchanged a quick glance before Tony continued.

"The Avengers got a tip that there might be a scouting party from some unfriendlies. Black Widow confirmed that there were strange reports in the area. Took the kids out and found a

new friend,” He paused, looking at Steve again who looked at the ground and nodded.

“We found her easy enough, don’t think she was hiding at all. In fact, Bruce is sure she wanted to be found. We took her here and all she’s said, in the entire two days in her interrogation room, is that she wants to talk to you.”

“Me?”

“Yep. ‘I will speak with Morrigan Healy’ are the only six words she’s spoken.” Tony used a stereotypical witch voice when repeating the words of the woman they had found.

“She asked for me? In English?” Morrigan was knocked dumb. How would this woman know her name? She was a nobody. What if she was on the run like Eros? Maybe he had told her about how Morrigan translated for him when he arrived. Thoughts and ideas raced through her mind.

“And that’s why we’re gonna need you to talk to her,” Tony concluded. The continued glances with Steve laden with worry.

“Okay. Where is she?”

The three men with her paused. The silence was heavy.

“Are you sure?” Steve asked, hand reaching out instinctively before he pulled it back and held it behind his back. “We wouldn’t ask you to speak with her if we thought this was dangerous.”

“Dangerous? What do you mean dangerous? Eros was fine,” Morrigan asked, confusion knitting her brows.

“Well not everyone can be a handsome devil can they?” Tony nearly whispered at the same time Steve started explaining.

“Dr. Healy, we need you to speak with this woman. We need to find out more about who she is and what she’s doing here,”

“All I can say is that I can try. Where is she?”

“Right here,” Tony leaned back across the desk and grabbed the remote to turn on the television. Blinking to life the TV showed a small interrogation room similar to Eros’. Morrigan stood to take a closer look at the woman in the feed. She could feel every hair on her neck standing up and resisted the urge to actually snarl in fear. Every alarm bell in her head was ringing.

At the table sat a woman or at least what Morrigan thought was a woman. Morrigan could only guess that she was relatively young but she couldn’t really say. Horns protruded from her temples as her long blue hair fell down her back. She was seated upright, rigid and at complete attention. The only thing Morrigan could focus on were her eyes. The woman seated at the table was looking directly at the camera, almost as if she was staring right

through it. Her expression was frigid and filled with contempt. Morrigan could feel the rage and heat in her eyes as she stared back at the screen in front of her. Her eyes *burned*.

Chapter Four

Chapter Notes

Oh man, I'm alive. Please enjoy! I'll update when I can. Writer's block got me again!

Breathe in for seven seconds, hold for four, out for eight.

Breathe in for seven seconds, hold for four, out for eight.

Breathe in for seven seconds, hold for four, out for eight.

Morrigan stood in front of the interrogation room. She focused on her breathing rather than focusing on the woman she could see through the glass. The group had entered the waiting room for the interrogation cell. As if by some magic the woman on the other side of the one-way glass seemed to stare at her. Her eyes following Morrigan as she moved around the room.

Now faced with the reality of entering the room all certainty was lost for Morrigan. She forced her hands to still at her sides as she continued breathing. Every hair on her neck was standing on end and she was glad she missed breakfast that morning with the way her stomach turned.

“We’ll be just on the other side if you need us. Are you ready now?” Morrigan felt a hand on her shoulder which caused her to jump a little before turning her head to look at Captain America as he spoke softly to her.

His smile was friendly but it didn’t reach his eyes. He looked concerned. Morrigan didn’t want to think about that as she pressed her lips into a thin smile and gave the tiniest nod.

Taking one more breath before entering the decontamination room, Morrigan pulled her back straight and willed herself to walk with more confidence than she had. She pushed the door open and was surrounded by the decontamination cloud. The process finished and she stepped into the interrogation room.

“You must be Morrigan Healy,” the woman spoke as soon as she entered. Morrigan schooled her face into a cool, calm and collected mask. She would not be frightened.

“Yes, that's me. I am Morrigan Healy.”

“Fascinating,” The creature's eyes flashed with curiosity. Morrigan stepped closer to the table.

“Would you be alright if I sat and talked with you for a while?”

Morrigan was falling back on her courtesies, hoping that being polite would help her with the alien in front of her. Morrigan pointed to the chair in front of the woman, looking for permission to sit.

The alien looked from Morrigan's hand to the chair and then directly into Morrigan's eyes. A wide grin split her face as she nodded slightly. Morrigan sat and tried her best to appear calm, leaning back into the seat. She hoped that the alien woman would follow her body language. The hope was in vain as the woman continued to sit straight up at attention.

“I'm not one to try to beat around the bush, so, can you tell me why you're here?” Morrigan decided to jump in feet first. Unlike Eros, this woman didn't seem like someone to try and lure into talking. Either she would or she wouldn't. To Morrigan's surprise, she answered her right away.

“Oh, I'm here for you. I needed to see you and now I have.” Her voice was clipped and economical like every word cost something to say. Morrigan couldn't put her finger on what but something in this woman intrigued her as much as it frightened her.

“Well, here I am. What do you need to speak with me about?” Morrigan forced herself to work past the primal urge to keep her body closed off and sat with open body language. With how frank the conversation had been, Morrigan expected the woman to respond immediately.

A few seconds passed. Then a minute. The alien just looked at Morrigan with her red eyes, almost as if she were waiting for Morrigan to understand some secret. Morrigan let more time pass, hoping the silence would make the creature uncomfortable enough to talk. More moments passed and Morrigan decided to try a different tactic.

“How did you learn English? You speak it well for not being from around here.”

“It’s common enough.”

“Oh well, that’s good to know. I don’t have much experience with aliens, which I’m sure you’re aware of. Can you tell me, where are you from?”

“From a long-dead planet that isn’t worth remembering,” The woman looked away from Morrigan for the first time in the conversation. Her whole head turned away.

‘There! Like Eros!’ Morrigan thought. This was where she would need to dig in.

“So are you running from something?”

The woman across from her froze.

“Or is it someone?”

The alien slowly turned her head back to Morrigan. Morrigan knew she was close to some part of the truth. This alien must be another refugee, like Eros. Morrigan could already feel herself getting ready to invest in this woman and making sure she was safe. The alien across from her finished the calculated turn of her head and made eye contact again.

Her whole face was split into a smile that rooted Morrigan to the spot. This woman wasn't running from anything and seemed amused that Morrigan would even suggest it. Her eyes glittered with laughter at a joke Morrigan didn't know. Her silent laughter caused waves of frustration to break over Morrigan.

"If your whole goal in coming to our planet was to speak with me you aren't saying much." Morrigan barked, eyes narrowing under her furrowed brow and her hands turning to fists in her lap. She did not like to be played with.

"The moment you entered the room my mission was completed. I'm just awaiting orders now."

"And who gives you those orders?"

"You'll meet everyone soon enough, little Akari."

"What?" Morrigan felt all of the blood drain out of her face and her brain stopped functioning.

She called me Akari.

The realization of the statement shattered all pretense and laid Morrigan bare in front of this monster. The smile radiating from the woman wasn't kind, it was filled with gleeful malice that Morrigan had only seen once before. It looked just like the few images Shield had of Loki when he attacked New York.

*Run, leave. **NOW!***

Morrigan could hear her body telling her to move but all she could do was stare at this alien with vacant eyes. Her ears ringing, her body froze in place.

“Hey! Hey! Hello in there? Get out of there, we’ve heard enough!”

With a dawning realization that she wasn’t just hearing static Morrigan started to comprehend that someone was actually speaking in her earpiece. More accurately it was Ironman yelling at her to get out.

With no ceremony or grace, Morrigan stood, spun on her heel and fled the room. She threw open the door and flung herself inside. Slamming the door shut behind her Morrigan leaned against the wall as the decontamination started.

She called me Akari.

Morrigan stared at the wall in front of her. Her mind blank, her body numb. Morrigan began to register that the air was getting thick. She needed to get out of the chamber, she needed to get out right now. Morrigan hurled herself against the door leading to the waiting room. She slammed her palm on it, once, twice, three times.

She called me Akari.

“Please let me out!” Morrigan called through the door. Hadn’t the decontamination process gone on long enough? It had never been this long before. She slammed her hand against the door a fourth time.

“I’m ready to get out! Let me out, let me out, let me **OUT!**” Morrigan felt her hand pounding the door. Her voice shredding her throat as her pleas grew into screams.

SHE CALLED ME AKARI!

Both of her hands were now slamming on the door. The air was like soup filling her lungs. Every breath was painful. Morrigan's beatings on the door slowed and she felt her legs give out under her. Waves of sensation flew up and down her arms causing every hair on her body

to stand on end. They were going to leave her in here. Something must have come to light in the interrogation to cause them to cut their losses.

She called me Akari.

Sobs ripped out of her mouth as oxygen started to run low. Morrigan's vision tunneled as she slumped against the door. Feebly she shoved herself against it, using the last of her energy to push against the unfeeling door.

Air rushed in to greet her as the door opened into the room. Morrigan collapsed onto all fours coughing out the air from the decontamination room. She could feel every atom in her body vibrating. Morrigan could tell there was something wrong. She could hear the commotion above her, around her, inside her. There was too much noise, too much feeling happening, too much air.

She could feel the magic rippling out from her. Short gasping breaths were doing nothing to stop it. Her sobs turned to heaves and Morrigan flung her arm out towards the trash bin which hurled across the room into her hand. Tears streamed down her face as her body convulsed with the pent up energy inside her. She could feel everyone too intensely, they were too close. Morrigan could feel a hand on her wrist, a hand on her back and another on her shoulder.

“Please don’t touch me,” she whimpered. No one seemed to hear or care. The feelings of too much didn’t stop, the noise didn’t stop, the touching didn’t stop.

“I said don’t **TOUCH ME.**”

The energy that had been wound up, ricocheted off of Morrigan and slammed into everyone around her. The hands that were on her were suddenly gone. The voices and noise were silent. Morrigan felt stable again, if only for a moment. She fell back, sat on the ground and pulled her knees to her chest, tucking her head against her knees.

She lost control of her magic. Another crushing realization swept over her. While unintentional, it happened consciously. Everything she has done to protect her family was

ruined. The silence continued to press in on her. Where once was a cacophony of sounds there now was oppressive quiet.

“I’m sorry, oh my god, I’m so sorry,” Morrigan whispered. Tears began spilling out of her eyes.

“Hey now, it’s okay. We’re okay, you’re okay,” Morrigan heard Captain America call out softly.

She heard someone step towards her and kneel down to her level.

“You’re okay now, alright?” he said again

“I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry,” Morrigan shook her head and looked up at him.

“Oh my God, what happened to your eyes? They’re completely bloodshot.”

Morrigan blinked. She didn’t feel any discomfort. The look on Captain’s face was etched with concern. He was already moving to pick her up before Morrigan had a chance to say she was fine.

“Come on kid, let’s get you looked at.”

Morrigan began to sputter out a protest at the close contact but was silenced when her vision tunneled at the sudden movement. Instead of pushing away like her mind wanted her to do Morrigan felt her body curl into his chest as she was carried out of the room.

Exhaustion settled in while they walked to the infirmary. She felt her mind slip in an out of focus. The whole while she continued to whisper apologies as tears poured from her eyes. The pitiful voice coming from here was one that she hardly recognized. Steve hushed her and told her not to speak and eventually, Morrigan was left with just her tears in the haze.

Morrigan awoke in a hospital bed. She was on top of the sheets and there was an IV in her arm. Her head was splitting and her stomach turned like the worst hangover possible. She blinked heavily a few times and looked around the room with a feeling of lag in her vision.

In front of her, she saw Captain America speaking to an Asian woman who was a doctor of some sort. Morrigan must have made a noise because they both looked up at her at the same time.

The doctor was at her side in an instant. Her hand delicately placed on Morrigan's wrist while she checked her pulse.

"I'm Doctor Cho, you're lucky I was here anyway. For a group that fights the bad guys constantly, they don't actually have a live-in doctor."

Once she'd gotten the read on Morrigan's pulse she moved to her eyes. Opening them wide and shining a light in them.

"Good news is it looks like you just had a panic attack that made you hyperventilate and pass out. Look to the left. Shockingly your eyes are just fine now. I don't see any remnants of the hemorrhaging. Let the IV finish and I'll take it out. How do you feel?"

"I'm... okay. I feel like I just woke up from an all-night bender."

Doctor Cho nodded before asking, "Was that the first time you experienced a power surge like that? Captain told me what happened after your interrogation session."

Morrigan turned away, shame filling her. She mashed her lips in a hard line, brow furrowing. She couldn't believe that she lost control to that extreme. She was foolish, undisciplined and now her poor judgment was coming back to haunt her.

“No. This hasn’t happened before,” Morrigan forced out. Unbidden tears of rage leaked out from her eyes. Morrigan aggressively swiped them away. Captain stepped forward at that moment and laid his hand on Morrigan’s shoulder.

“You’re under a lot of stress and we asked a lot from you. You might be a Shield agent but, with respect, you’re a civilian. It’s okay to need a moment.”

“I’m okay,” Morrigan mumbled, the palm of her hand rubbing away the last of the tears. She was so angry with herself. How could she have been so stupid? She had just had a slip-up and now she showcased her magic for the Avengers to see. This wasn’t going to be swept under the rug.

Doctor Cho wrote down all of Morrigan's vitals on a chart that she left on the desk. She gave Morrigan a pat on her leg before showing herself out of the room.

Steve gave her shoulder another squeeze before pulling up a chair to sit next to her bedside. He leaned his elbows down on his knees, his hands pressed together as if in prayer. The tips of his fingers rested just under his mouth and his face rested into a look of deep contemplation. Heaving a sigh, he leaned back and tried to relax his posture. His fingers skimmed his lips a few times before he decided to speak.

“Is it okay if I ask you a few questions, Morrigan?” He looked at Morrigan for approval and with the nod of her head he continued, “Did you know you had powers before today?”

“Yes,” Morrigan barely whispered. She knew better than to lie to Captain America.

“Do you normally use magic?”

“No.”

“Wanna tell me what happened back there?”

Morrigan took a big breath before starting, her eyes blank as she stared at her hands in her lap. No, she didn't want to tell him, but she didn't have much of a choice.

"It was magic not 'powers'. I can manipulate my environment, kinda like Scarlet Witch but it's not the same. To be honest, I don't know much about it," Morrigan laughed at herself darkly, "I haven't used my powers at all in well over 15 years. I lost complete control today, something that never should have happened."

Steve nodded, his hand covering his mouth. Silence enveloped the pair, neither one making any move to release the tension that was building up.

"I have one more question if you'll let me, and then you can rest more. Deal?" Steve asked, his face open, honest, curious. Morrigan could tell he meant it and nodded again giving him room to ask.

"What does Akari mean? The alien said it and you looked like you had shell shock. You kept saying it too as I brought you here."

Morrigan froze. Her hands had been idly playing with the sheets during Steve's questioning. A small dose of adrenaline from earlier flickered to life again in her veins. Her thoughts swirled and turned into mayhem in her mind. Her hands clenched the sheet in front of her. She was so sick of crying but couldn't help the unbidden tears that leaked out. She had no energy to wipe them away as they fell silently to her lap.

She had failed them. Her grandmother, her family, her people. All of them were now at risk and it was all her fault. The magic she used would have alerted anyone looking for that brand of magic's signature in an instant. She'd just alerted the universe to the hiding place of the Akari, a secret that had lived for over a thousand years, and Morrigan destroyed it in five minutes due to her complete lack of ability to just be *normal*.

Morrigan released the breath she didn't know she was holding. Closing her eyes she willed herself to relax. She needed to handle this one situation at a time. Looking up from her lap she looked at Captain America in the eyes for the first time since she woke up.

“That’s not something I can tell you,” It was a simple statement. There was no venom in her words and from what Steve could tell Morrigan had wanted to but simply couldn’t. Before either of them could speak further the door to the infirmary nearly slammed opened.

Black Widow only leaned halfway in the door. The intensity in her face and body language rolled off of her and into the room. Morrigan immediately went on alert. Something was wrong.

“We’ve got a situation Cap,” Black Widow said, “The alien is gone. No one knows how she got out, or where she is. All security footage is blank. She’s just gone.”

Steve stood, already poised to leap into action when Black Widow continued.

“That’s not all. According to our perimeter alerts, we also have all sorts of guests. A group of eight people suddenly appeared RIGHT outside our defense line at the exact same moment a giant spaceship pinged on the outskirts of the solar system.”

Chapter Five

Chapter Notes

How wow! Thanks to everyone who started reading this! I started this fic a while back and it's crazy that only recently I've gotten responses on it. I love you all for taking the time to read it! All of your comments give me life and motivate me to keep going! <3

I can't say when the next chapter is going to be released. I work a full time job and write on the side when I have the time. Just be patient with me and I'll update! No fic left behind! Please enjoy!

Eight dots sat brightly on the map projected on the monitor in the front of the room. Eight unmoving, sinister dots waiting just outside of the compound's protective barriers. In the hour since their sudden appearance, they hadn't moved at all. So much stress and anxiety over a tiny set of pixels.

Morrigan sat in the command center watching the screens. She had convinced Captain America to let her observe from behind. She sat quietly, pinching the tips of her fingers in restless anxiety. The tech team couldn't get video confirmation on the eight figures, something jammed the video feeds every time they tried. Without much other choice Director Fury sent a team of three to meet with whoever was there. From the command center, the team watched Captain America, Black Widow, and Hawkeye moving towards the perimeter.

Slowly the three dots representing the Avengers got within range of the visitors. Each member had a chest camera on but, like the long-range cameras, there was something causing interference with the video feed. Radio seemed unaffected as Natasha's voice filled the room.

"We've got visual, sir." Morrigan sat straight up, her whole body at attention, listening for more.

"They don't look armed but they do have armor on. They look Asgardian, too bad Thor's not here to let us know," Widow continued.

"Permission to approach, sir?"

"Granted." Fury answered, leaning over the communication microphone.

The three dots moved forward and all at once their three video feeds cut completely out. While she knew it was coming based on previous video attempts, Morrigan couldn't help jumping slightly at the sudden loss of visual contact.

“Hello, Captain. We do not seek to cause distress or damage to you or your team but you have something that must be returned.”

Morrigan furrowed her brow. She knew that voice.

“I’m afraid I don’t know what you folks mean by that,” Steve answered. “You’re gonna have to be clear. See, a lot of things happened at once and we’re a little on edge over here. Mind sharing what this is about?”

Through the speakers, you could hear the sound of shifting armor. The mysterious shapes didn’t move from their spots.

“The girl you have is not safe to be near. You must return her. We will take care of the threat to you.”

Chills ran down Morrigan’s spine. Not safe. She wasn’t safe. This was a second voice, different from the one before. Again, creeping feelings of recognition teased at Morrigan’s memory. She felt herself standing and moving closer to the speaker near the front. She needed to hear more. Whoever they were, they knew about her and the risk she posed.

“I’m afraid that’s a no can do,” Captain responded, “The safest place for her right now is with us.”

“You have no idea what you’re undertaking human,” the first voice answered, “Give her to us, we know her better than you.”

Morrigan felt the weight of the eyes of the room on her. She wanted to melt into the floor and disappear. This was all her fault. The familiarity of the voice bothered her. She knew it but couldn’t place it.

Her thoughts were stopped in their tracks when the hushed voice of Hawkeye came through the speakers.

“I have clear visual and can take the shot if needed sir.”

“That won’t be necessary Archer.” A new third voice called out.

Morrigan felt her neck cry in protest with how quickly her head snapped up at the sound of the third person. Evey. It was Evey. The eight figures were members of the Conclave.

Morrigan flung herself forward to the command mic, shoving everyone out of her way in her haste.

“Stand down Captain! Please!” Morrigan didn’t care about the frantic pitch in her voice. “Don’t hurt them. They don’t mean harm! Please, trust me. Let them in, I’ll talk with them.”

Arms pulled Morrigan back as she continued to shout at the ground team.

“You have to listen to me! Let me go with them, please!” Morrigan struggled against the strong arms pulling her back and out of the room. In one last frantic move, she hurled herself

forward and back to the microphone.

“They’re my family! PLEASE!”

The hands trying to pull Morrigan back suddenly released her and the room was silent. Morrigan could feel the glances happening behind her but she didn’t care. Her family was here. They never left the island. This was more serious than she thought.

“Were you expecting this family reunion, Dr. Healy?” Morrigan heard the director call out from behind her. She dumbly shook her head. What had gotten into her recently? She might as well give over the coordinates to her home while she was at it. Secrets were apparently a hard thing for her to keep.

“Well, are they dangerous?”

Again Morrigan shook her head before murmuring, “They just came for me, please, let me speak with them. I’ll sort it out.”

Morrigan turned to Director Fury, her face calm, collected and stern. She hoped she looked more confident than she felt. She knew Evey would listen, but the others? That was anyone’s guess.

“If I let them in,” Fury stated, raising a hand to point in Morrigan’s face. “I will hold you personally responsible for any damage. Is that understood?”

“Yes, sir. If we don’t start any confrontation, they won’t either. I’d stake my life on it that they won’t harm anyone here,”

Fury appraised her with his one good eye. His skepticism rolling off him like waves. Without taking his eyes off her he addressed the woman on his right.

“Agent Hill. Open the shielding with enough space to allow them in, single file. Alert Cap that he’s to lead them here but to not discuss anything until I say so. We’ll wait for them out back.”

Fury grabbed Morrigan’s elbow and led her out of the room while Agent Hill implemented his orders. The grip wasn’t harsh but implied cooperation. Morrigan followed along with Director Fury, her mind surprisingly blank for what had just happened. She was going to see her family, her sister. She knew she should feel more excited but really she felt empty. If she had time to think she was sure she’d be losing her mind with stress but for the moment she just was.

Fury led the two outside and stopped at the top of a flight of stairs. Morrigan stood side by side with Director Fury looking out to the grounds behind the compound. She fidgeted as she stood, swaying slightly, pinching her fingertips and readjusting her hair. If Fury was bothered by her constant movement he didn’t comment to which she was grateful.

Anxiety started rolling around in her gut like a lead ball. It kept trying to bubble out of her throat and Morrigan had to use all of her control to keep it down. She hadn’t seen any of her

family in person in over 15 years. The thought of hugging her twin made her want to collapse into her arms and sob away the terrible years apart, while the other part of her wanted to run far away and never be seen again.

A low flying jet passed overhead making Morrigan jump. She looked up at it and realized that it wasn't a jet, it was Ironman. The bright red suit could be seen circling the compound. Morrigan wasn't too surprised. In fact, she wouldn't put it past Fury to have all of the Avengers suited up and waiting in the wings. Ignoring Morrigan's plea to avoid perceived confrontation, Fury must have insisted that everyone suit up just in case the peaceful discussions got out of hand.

From the foot of the staircase, the Avengers compound stretched out for nearly the length of a football field and three times as wide. They clearly used this space for training and other drills from all of the equipment left out on the right side of the open field. Directly across from the waiting pair on the stairs was the tree line for the surrounding forest. Morrigan still wasn't quite sure where the compound was located, but the density of the trees led her to believe they were fairly deep in the mountains. It reminded her terribly of home.

After a few minutes, movement could be seen beyond the trees. Morrigan held her breath as she watched Hawkeye, Black Widow and Captain America leading the small group out of the forest. Morrigan moved to try and see the approaching people behind the Avengers. After what felt like an eternity she saw them.

Weaving out of the trees like spirits in the woods the eight members of the Conclave, her family, began their approach behind the team leading them. They walked in no discernible formation, their hooded grey cloaks up and wrapped about them, hiding their features making it impossible for Morrigan to spot her sister. The wait was agony. To Morrigan, it felt like time had stopped and no matter how long she watched them walking towards her she felt like they never actually moved.

Eventually, after what felt like an eternity of waiting, Morrigan started to recognize features within the cloaked group. She saw the black hair of her youngest cousin Elizabeth, the towering presence of her cousin Christian, and then in the middle a flash of blond hair under a hood. That had to have been her.

"Easy now doctor, we don't know yet if this is your family."

Fury's voice seemed to filter through the fog to reach Morrigan's ears. She hadn't even noticed she had stepped forward until his words brought her to reality.

"What do you mean? Of course, they're my family." Morrigan dismissed him, not taking her eyes off the golden hair in front of her.

"Trust me, Doctor Healy, not everyone is who you think they are. I bet my eye on that and lost."

Morrigan gave the director a confused look but he kept his face forward and didn't add more to his comment. He just stood, stoic with his arms crossed as the Conclave made their final approach.

Leading the whole entourage was Captain America but the group followed closely behind. Moving right up the steps Steve, Natasha and Clint joined the pair waiting for them. All of the newcomers stood at the foot of the stairs with their hoods still up and covering their faces. Captain America took his place behind Morrigan, far enough behind her to give her space but Morrigan knew he was close enough to grab her if needed. For some reason, that thought filled her with a little confidence as one of the hooded figures began speaking.

“Well met cousin, it’s been a while.” The voice from earlier was speaking. With precise movements, all of the eight figures removed their hoods at the same time.

Morrigan couldn’t see for a moment through the tears that crept through. It took her a moment to realize she was clenching her fists and shaking. Blinking rapidly and chastising herself for being emotional she pulled it together to take the first good look at her family in over fifteen years.

Every one of the eight figures had the same armor on, though some different decorations added to indicate rank. The grey cloaks covered the battle armor they wore, to the untrained eye Morrigan could understand how they would think her family was Asgardian.

Each person wore a chest piece that covered their entire torso, it was layered at the bottom to allow for the full range of motion at the hips. The shoulders had fanned wing patterns on them, protecting the armpit while still giving full range of movement to fight. Everyone had on leather gauntlets protecting their forearms and hands, a house symbol etched into the right and the symbol of the Conclave, an ouroboros with a great winged dragon. The final armor on their legs continued the wing pattern and protected their shins and feet. They looked glorious in Morrigan’s eyes.

Of the eight figures, Morrigan could only recognize four of the eight. Her sight landed first on her three cousins, Elizabeth, Sabina, and Christian. They were all part of the offensive branches of the Conclave so it made sense that they would be part of the group coming to collect her. The trio stood side by side, and while they were each nearly exactly two years apart in age, they looked like triplets.

They all looked shockingly alike. Tall and muscular, all three looked like human weapons just waiting to be unleashed. Elizabeth and Sabina were shorter than their brother Christian but not by much. Their black hair looked almost blue in the afternoon light and their golden skin looked unnaturally warm matched with their icy blue eyes. All of them, to Morrigan’s secret pleasure, also took after their father and had his large beak-like nose right in the center of their faces, giving them a vulture-like quality.

Morrigan skimmed the faces of the other three she didn’t know. They looked like standard soldiers and Morrigan didn’t care to catalog their faces. Who she wanted to see was in dead center, looking up at her with maternal care that made Morrigan’s very bones ache for her embrace.

Evey.

Bright, beautiful, happy Evey. Her sister, her twin, her other half. Evey looked even more radiant in person than she had looked in the projection. Her golden hair floated around her

face in graceful curls, her mouth delicately upturned and smiling at Morrigan. It was a sight Morrigan had resigned to never see again.

“Eebee?” Morrigan barely whispered.

“Hello Momo, it’s been far too long.”

At the sound of her nickname coming from her sister, Morrigan bolted down the stairs. She moved faster than anyone expected her to and Steve found his hand closing on empty air as he tried to reach her before she moved.

Nearly stumbling twice, Morrigan launched herself down the stairs into her sister’s open arms. She crashed into her and clutched at her other half, holding on as tightly as she could. The Akari were not exceptionally affectionate people but Morrigan found her sister holding her just as tightly as she was.

It took a moment for Morrigan to calm down. The years of isolation weighed heavily on her and she didn’t want to break the contact with her sister yet. Just a moment more where the world didn’t exist. It was still her and Evey versus the world.

A slight cough behind her caused Morrigan to release her death grip on her sister. Morrigan stepped back and Evey placed both hands on her sister’s face. She bowed her head and touched foreheads with Morrigan. Shutting her eyes once more Morrigan felt the heat her sister gave off, another stark difference between the two. Evey radiated heat and Morrigan was constantly cold.

“Peace be with you sister,” Evey whispered.

“And also with you, sister” Morrigan responded, the old phrase coming back effortlessly.

Morrigan took a step back and turned. She saw the disapproving look on Fury’s face, the cold indifference of Hawkeye and Black Widow, and the deep concern on Captain America’s face. Maybe leaping into the arms of a perceived threat might not have been the brightest idea.

“Director Fury let me introduce members of the Akari Conclave-” Morrigan gestured behind her towards her cousins, “-These are my cousins, Elizabeth, Sabina, and Christian.”

Taking a step forward the three named members gave slight stiff bows at their introduction. Morrigan grabbed her sister and linked her elbow with hers and gave her a huge smile.

“And this is my sister, Evey. Who I haven’t seen in many years.”

“While this family reunion is touching,” Morrigan heard Fury speak down to the group, “I think we have some pressing business to discuss.”

“We have nothing to discuss with you human,” Sabina’s voice cracked out like a whip. “We will take our cousin and go. Her presence here will no doubt bring more and you will not want to be near her when she does. She’s a plague and must be contained.”

Morrigan felt her face flush. She forgot how forthright her family was. Sabina might not have been wrong but the words hurt. Captain America's voice pulled Morrigan from her thoughts.

"Like I've told you before, that's a no can do. She's protected by the Avengers and with an inbound and unidentified ship approaching Earth I think it's best if all of you stay here."

"A ship?" Evey asked, her eyes searching Morrigan's face, "Do you know about this?"

"It happened to show on our scanners the same time you did. The whole campus went on lock down,"

"Momo, if this is true-" Evey didn't need to continue. The look in her eyes made Morrigan want to burst. Evey knew what it could mean. The odds of an alien ship appearing at the same time the Conclave arrived couldn't be a coincidence.

Morrigan did what she's been trained all her life to do, hide the truth. She smiled gently and felt her eyes warm even though her brain was drenched in anxiety.

"Let's go in," Morrigan said gently, "We can discuss everything there, including where I'll go next. This is what I signed up for when I joined Shield, you know that. I can't leave them right now."

Evey searched her sister's face. Morrigan could hear Sabina gearing up to say something else when Evey raised a hand to silence her.

"We will discuss with the Avengers what our next steps should be. If this is related we may need to work together. Come, cousins, let's be off, leave the guard outside."

Evey did it again, using that adult voice. A commanding voice, the voice of an Empress. And everyone listened. The four unknown Akari turned and walked towards the forest and Evey looked to her family to walk up the stairs.

"Right, okay then, we're just gonna let them in Fury?" Clint asked, his eyebrows raised in suspicion.

"To be honest Agent Barton, this lady right here finally said the first thing I agree with. Let's get inside."

Fury brought the group to a meeting room just off of central command. It was a large glass-walled room with a table for twelve in the center. Morrigan watched from her seat in the office as Captain American and Fury received details about the ship heading towards their little planet. Morrigan couldn't read Fury's face but Captain was basically an open book to her. She could read him like a children's novel in her sleep. He was worried and confused. Morrigan guessed that Shield didn't have much information.

Black Widow and Hawkeye had not joined the group in the room. Instead, they had gone off the help establish a stronger perimeter. While Morrigan understood that she wished she had more of a buffer between herself and her family.

What do you say to a group of people who said their goodbyes to you fifteen years ago with every intention (and hope) that they would never see you again? This wasn't ever supposed to happen. When Morrigan left she was supposed to be completely removed. Mourned like a lost family member, never to be spoken of again in polite conversation. In fact, to most of the Akari population, she was dead. It was easier that way.

Elizabeth, Sabina, and Christian opted to stand rather than take any of the offered seats. Their body language screaming displeasure at remaining in the human world for longer than they planned. Morrigan would lie if asked but a little part of her greatly enjoyed their discomfort.

Evey sat in the seat next to Morrigan. Her hand holding hers. They didn't need to speak, it was the blessing that connected them. They knew the other's thoughts without speaking or judgment. Together again in balance, the way things should be.

The door opened, startling Morrigan and Evey. They both looked up as Fury and Steve entered the room. Steve took a seat near Fury at the front of the room. His hand fisted on his cheek like he was already exhausted. Fury, on the other hand, stood at the head of the table with his arms crossed. Captain America, Evey, and Morrigan on one side, Elizabeth, Sabina and Christian on the other. Everyone's attention was locked in on the director.

"So, now that we've got our little party all together in think it's time for some honesty." He paused, eyeing the group in the room before continuing. "We brought Morrigan here to help with some translations. She spoke to another unexpected guest about three hours ago. In that time, I've had an unexplained power attack my team, eight strangers materialize out of nowhere, the first alien ship to cross our new sensors in the outer galaxy with a trajectory that will put it in spitting distance of Earth in less than 24 hours. Now, will someone tell me how the fuck this is all connected because I'm used to being the guy in the know and I won't tolerate being out of it for long."

Fury made heated eye contact with everyone in the room during his speech. His sight falling on Morrigan last and piercing her in place with his stare. Before Morrigan could start talking Christian's deep voice rang out first.

"We don't need to share anything with you. We simply need to take our cousin and leave." His voice had developed an air of poshness that Morrigan couldn't remember. It retained none of the boyish quality it had when she recalled playing with him in her younger years. Morrigan was starting to reach the end of her patience. They needed to work together in this state of unknown.

"Christian, you don't need to be like this," Morrigan spoke to the tabletop, unable to look directly at her cousin. "I'll go anywhere you want when this is done but right now we could be facing Earth's next alien contact on a massive scale and you saw what happened in New York. This is our chance to have an impact."

Morrigan finally looked up to her fuming relatives. The trio stared daggers at her, Elizabeth sent Evey a scathing look that Evey coolly returned.

"Let's do our best to manage the connections we have here cousins," Evey crooned, that leader voice showing command again. "We live here too,"

“Morrigan, you know them best. How should we proceed?” Evey asked while squeezing Morrigan’s hand.

“Well, let’s start with what we know. Then Director Fury and Captain can ask some questions. I’ll answer for you all. I’m already removed from the island so I can’t get in trouble if I say the wrong thing like any of you could. Is that alright?”

Morrigan looked at her family and was surprised to see them all nod in agreement. Morrigan returned the nod and looked to her director.

“Want to start by giving everyone introductions?” Fury asked.

“Yes, sir. I’m sure you all know about Captain America, that one’s easy. Evey, cousins, this is Director Fury. He is in charge of all Shield. I’m still in the linguistics division and was brought to this base to interrogate an alien.”

“Director, Captain, these are members of my family. My cousins, you met earlier and this is my sister Evey. My twin actually.” Morrigan smiled at her sister but the smile didn’t reach her eyes.

“We all belong to a race called the Akari. Think of us like Asgardians in a way. We have magic and a whole history. It would be a lot to go into and our magic might actually prevent me from telling you everything. The general idea is that we live alone, away from the human population and have done so for at least a few thousand years.”

“So why aren’t you there?” Fury asked, his arms still crossed.

“I left,” Morrigan stated sadly. “I left when I was 14. I take suppressants to stop my magic, it was part of the deal in my leaving. Every Akari has a brand of magic, almost like a different language or color for each style. Mine is,” Morrigan paused searching for the right words. “Destructive, violent and generally uncontrollable. It also has a very specific signature. If you know what to look for any time I use my magic is like a lighthouse to not only me but to other Akari. This is why I left.”

Morrigan pressed her lips together, her jaw clenching. She still resented her powers. How they drove her away from her family. Her magic only magnified the closer she was to the others. They thought that the suppressants alone would protect her but they didn’t. Morrigan learned that the hard way. The only real way to keep her people safe was to remove herself from them and the magic entirely. She shook her head to clear her mind of her intrusive thoughts before continuing.

“I’ve had two accidents in recent months. One accident while I was sleeping and then my fight or flight response this afternoon.” Morrigan grimaced again at her own foolish display of lack of control.

“So my actions today flashed out a ‘*We’re here*’ sign to anyone listening. Obviously, my people would be looking and it looks like whoever is on that ship is looking too.”

Morrigan had never felt so uncomfortable in her entire life. She felt like her soul was laid bare in front of her. She couldn't look up from her hands in her lap. Her shame weighed down on her like an elephant on her chest.

"Well," Steve's voice cut through the fog in Morrigan's mind, "I guess that settles it. Morrigan stays here."

Morrigan whipped her head up to stare at him. He couldn't be serious didn't he hear what she just said?

At his words, the room erupted into chaos. Elizabeth and Sabina were shouting at Captain America and Christian was yelling at Evey. The noise was too much. Morrigan heard Fury step in and join the chorus of voices. Morrigan could feel the anger and frustration rising in the room. Her family was inches away from opening the magic in their veins and Morrigan couldn't handle it if that happened.

"ENOUGH!" Morrigan slammed her hand down on the table, rattling everyone out of their arguments.

"Please, Captain, continue your thought," Morrigan flexed the hand on the hard surface of the table. She hated it when people argued in groups like that. What was the point?

"As I said, she stays here. First, it sounds like she needs some training in controlling her powers, not just suppressing them. We know how to do that. Second, she's just as stressed and scared as you are and if what she says is true, placing her in the center of your people will only make her magic worse. Third, we can fight. Whatever's coming isn't gonna stop. We can face it here. Now if y'all want to stay and fight then be my guest, I won't say no to help, but Morrigan is a Shield Agent. We take care of our own."

Morrigan stared at Steve. No one had ever fought for her. No one had ever wanted her to stay. She found herself speechless at his words.

Morrigan tore her eyes off of Captain America to look at her family. They were exchanging intense looks and it looked like Evey was winning. Finally, Sabina threw her hands up and turned away from the group. Elizabeth and Christian just crossed their arms as Evey shared a triumphant grin.

"Excellent points Captain. We conceded to this request. How can we support your teams?"

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Hi All! Thank you for the Kudos and comments! They kept me going as the past few weeks kicked my butt. I work in a large company and with COVID-19 and needing to build new training to address the racial injustice in our community, I've had little to no motivation to work on personal creative projects. Things are starting to settle which has given me more time to work on things for me. Hoping the next update won't take as long!

Thank you all for following along with this story! It's been fun to escape in building the details of this world and I'm grateful for a chance to share it.

13 hours. Every astrophysicist, engineer, and mathematician said the same thing. They had 13 hours or less to prepare. The ship moved closer every minute and seemed to be in no rush to arrive. Was this the standard speed of intergalactic travel? Is this why Loki had to portal in his army? Or was it intentional? Was the ship and her crew moving slowly to communicate no hostile intentions? Everyone had the same questions but no one asked them. They were all afraid of the answers.

During the 13 hours, all available SHIELD agents swarmed the campus. The Avengers suited up and began preparing the site for first contact. Ironman and War Machine patrolled the sky, Hawkeye and Black Widow organized the ground troops, and Dr. Banner worked with the science team to anticipate arrival and to boost the site's defenses.

Morrigan's family prepared in their own way and alerted their people back home. Elizabeth, Sabina and Christian took over a portion of the back training area outside to run drills. A crowd gathered to watch the exercises. The trio moved together like one consciousness. Their movements flowed from one to the next like artists in a complexly choreographed dance. For a time, Morrigan had watched them practice. Though her cousins didn't use any of their powers Morrigan could see their placeholders as they marked their attacks. Even with years apart she could still keep up with their movements and stances. She had learned most of the foundations of magic as a child but that had stopped when she turned 13, a year before her departure.

As time ticked on, Morrigan began to feel restless, and the eyes on her while she watched the drills became too much. She could only handle the whispering and glares from her cousins so long and the constant pressure forced Morrigan upstairs and onto the roof.

On her way up Morrigan spotted her sister, Evey. She was too preoccupied with speaking with Director Fury to pay much attention to anything else. So Morrigan faded into the hustle

and bustle of the site and made her way up and out. Blending back into the background was normal.

Up on the roof, Morrigan sat on a SHIELD hoodie she found from the lost item bin. Her back rested against what she assumed was an air conditioning unit, and her feet dangled over the edge. She got as comfortable as she could. She knew her presence wouldn't be missed, they would figure out what to do with her without her. She couldn't fight, had hardly any technical background, and only spoke earth languages. In a combat situation, she'd be useless. Now, if the aliens wanted to talk? That was a different story but Morrigan's gut said they weren't here to talk.

Time passed quickly for Morrigan and eventually twilight fell onto the forest they were hidden in. The wildlife began to settle for the night and stars started making their appearance. As time counted down, the number of people outside diminished until Morrigan was finally alone.

The peaceful sounds of the evening began filling the air. Crickets started their chorus and the birds sang along on their flight home. The air fluttered about causing Morrigan's hair to dance softly around her head. Grabbing all the loose strands, Morrigan held the rogue hair in place, holding them at the nape of her neck. Clutched in her other hand was the playbook for first contact procedures. A stupidly, complex document created by SHIELD that held no bearing on reality (*offer a handshake upon greeting? Really?*) but Morrigan poured over it not knowing what else she could do.

"You know," a voice from behind one of the industrial units called, startling Morrigan causing her to drop everything in her hands. The playbook began tumbling out in front of her. The booklet flipped in the air as Morrigan frantically grabbed at it before catching it by the spine and clutching it to her chest. Morrigan curled over, setting the book in her lap and covering her face with both hands.

"You should've been getting rest while you could've. ETA is 20 minutes from reaching the atmosphere." With a sly knowing grin crinkling the corners of his eyes, Captain America appeared around the corner.

"Oh my god! Captain!" Morrigan groaned out. "You scared me! I nearly dropped the playbook over the edge."

"You know, I think at this point you can call me Steve."

"With all due respect Captain, I'll still call you Captain until I'm off duty. Don't forget I'm still a SHIELD Agent." Morrigan said from behind her hands as her heartbeat finally settled.

Dragging her hands down her face Morrigan let one eye peep out to steal a glance at the Captain. She wasn't expecting him to be watching her as intently as he was. His bright blue eyes held a softness and an understanding that Morrigan had to turn away from.

"Mind if I join you?" He asked, pointing to the half of the jacket next to Morrigan. Not knowing what else to say Morrigan nodded and scooted over to make more room on her makeshift balcony.

“Can’t blame you for not wanting to be cooped up inside.” He said as he brought himself down on the ledge. “All my life if I’ve known there’s a fight, nothin’ could stop me waiting for it.”

He sat a respectful distance away. His body was carefully placed far enough away to give Morrigan space but close enough to have his presence felt. He swung one leg over the edge and propped up his second leg bracing his elbow on his knees like an armrest.

The blush started creeping back up Morrigan's neck at the situation. She was alone with **THE** Captain America, watching the sunset and he was there to check on her well-being. She'd always loved Captain America. Morrigan had read all the old comic books and learned the real history of the Howling Commandos in her time at SHIELD Academy. She was equal parts enamored with being this close to him and horribly exposed because he knew her secret. Morrigan kept her head low and her body tightly aligned in the polite space that was ‘her’s’. Even down to holding the manual pressed tightly to her lap with both hands folded on top. Now was not the time to give in to emotions.

“Here,” Steve said, pulling Morrigan from her frantic thoughts. Digging into one of the pouches at his side, he pulled out a small earpiece and held it out to Morrigan.

“I got you an updated communicator. It’s on the highest clearance channel. I figured you’d probably be inside if it comes down to a fight and that you’d appreciate knowing what was happening with your family.”

Holding his hand out he waited for Morrigan to grab the small device from him. Reaching out tentatively, Morrigan picked up the piece. It was a tiny thing, about the size of an earplug, with the SHIELD logo on the outside. Taking out her standard-issue, Morrigan replaced the one in her ear and safely tucked the old one away.

“Thank you, Captain,” Morrigan said as she took the device. “I didn’t expect this level of consideration and I thank you for it.”

Morrigan was touched. She found herself at a loss for words and, for a linguist, that feeling didn't come often. Waiting would be hard enough without also waiting in ignorance. She didn't think anyone would care about her feelings in this.

“So,” He stated, pausing before continuing, ”do you want to be honest with me now?”

As he asked his question Captain turned his head slightly. Not enough to disrupt the casual air he gave off, but enough that Morrigan couldn’t run from the look he was giving her. He could easily turn his gaze right back to the forest yet, he didn’t. He kept his side glance focused, but soft, waiting for Morrigan to accept his request.

Morrigan didn’t know what to say. Half of her secret was out. How much longer could she pretend with so much already known. She had known this conversation was coming and she should be thankful that it was taking place here and not in some interrogation cell. Morrigan could feel herself curling in. The back of her neck felt exposed and her heart thundered in her chest.

Was now the time, to be honest? Is this when she could shake the constant fear of being found out? Morrigan looked back at Captain America. His eyes connected with hers and she knew it would be okay.

"This is all my fault." Unbidden tears welled up behind her eyes.

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to." Steve assured her. Morrigan shook her head and responded.

"No, I can tell you," Morrigan wiped at her eyes before inhaling deeply.

"I'm- Not human- Well not fully at least," Morrigan barely whispered out. She might not tell all but what she could say she would tell him. She would have to word her truth carefully. The protective magic her people used would be strong enough to cause him to only hear static or to forget what she just said. That same magic was the reason the video feeds couldn't broadcast their image. Breaking eye contact and staring at her fingers as she punched the tips of each one for something to ground onto before continuing.

"My family- my people- we aren't from earth. We arrived here over 1,000 years ago. All our lives are spent protecting the secret of our existence, there's only one other group of humans who know about us. It just so happens that they're just as secretive as we are so we support each other,"

Morrigan paused. Weighing the information before continuing.

"My people are called the Akari."

At her confession, Morrigan stole a moment to sneak a look at Captain America. If Steve was surprised or shocked he did a damn good job hiding it. His gaze had moved back to the forest and continued to stay forward. His only subtle change in expression was a single small nod and the slightest raise of his eyebrows. If Morrigan hadn't been cataloging his features she wouldn't have seen the changes.

"That's why you panicked when the alien you were interrogating called you an Akari." He concluded, piecing together the puzzle in his mind.

"Yeah," Morrigan managed out a single fake laugh. "that and she was kinda terrifying if you remember."

That earned a real laugh from Steve in return. Morrigan felt her body relax just slightly. For once, her secret wasn't hers alone to keep. Captain America could have found her, told her to return back to command, and continued on but he didn't. He stopped to check on her and stayed to hear what the truth was, which is more than could be said about her family.

"There aren't many like me." Morrigan found herself blurting out before she could stop herself. *Shit*. Captain America had fully turned to face her now, curiosity lighting his eyes.

"What do you mean?"

“Uh, I-“ Morrigan stuttered trying to think of a lie convincing and solid enough to take back what she started. In the adrenaline rush, the truth poured out.

“I think in our whole history there’s only been three Akari with powers like mine. The Creator from our religion so I don’t even know how real that is. The second appearance happened about 1,000 years ago, and then me. No one knows how or why there’s so few like me but you could imagine the stories they tell.”

Morrigan chuckled darkly, remembering her aunt’s expression when her powers were revealed. It’s hard to forget the look on someone’s face when they no longer see a child and now see a monster. Steve didn’t say anything and the silence trailed on. Morrigan couldn’t stand it and more truth spewed out.

“The most widely agreed upon theory is that I’m a plague from the gods and my existence harkens the end of times like the Antichrist.”

“You can’t believe that.”

Steve’s response was so instant that Morrigan didn’t process it at first. She felt her whole body freeze before turning to look at the man beside her. Steve looked angry, though Morrigan could tell that the anger wasn’t for her but for the people who’d said those things. The fact that he didn’t see her as a threat to humanity was refreshing. His immediate defense for her pulled her from the spiral she was falling into.

“Do I believe it?” Morrigan questioned out loud. Thinking on it for the first time in well over a decade.

“Not really. But,” She paused, considering her words carefully. “I am dangerous. My powers aren’t exactly safe. It’s why I repress them.”

“I left my family when I was 14 because my body can’t process the magic it creates. It’s kinda like asking a child to use a fire hose, if it’s released then I can hurt myself or anyone around me. I removed myself from our home and take a daily suppressant to keep myself and others safe. What happened earlier was a fight or flight stress response. It takes a lot of mental energy to keep myself in check.”

“If you’re in hiding and need to keep your stress down, why’d you join SHIELD?”

“I didn’t really plan on it if I’m honest.”

Morrigan leaned back on her arms. Confessing some of the truth felt freeing. Her family might be stuck on what could be but it seemed that for Captain America he would judge her on her actions.

“Languages come naturally to the Akari so I did well in my studies. I was scouted out of high school and didn’t look back. I figured I could try to do some good. Maybe find a way to prove my family wrong.”

“Oh, darling Morrigan. How sweet.”

A voice echoed and reverberated in her ears and her skull. Entirely too loud, too close, too foreign, too intimate. Morrigan sat upright and shook her head to clear her thoughts.

"I'm sorry, what did you say?" Morrigan asked, trying to catch what Steve had actually said.

"I didn't say anything." Captain responded, perplexion clear on his face.

"Oh. Heh - um, don't mind me. Must be stress." Morrigan dismissed herself with a wave of her own hand. "Should we go in now?"

With a last lingering look out across the back fields and treeline Captain America nodded and stood, offering a hand down to Morrigan to help her up. Morrigan slipped her hand into his, noticing the smooth texture of his gloves from use. The ever-present blush threatened to return as she brought her feet under her but she hadn't expected her legs to have gone slightly numb causing her to stumble. The misstep was easily caught by Steve and he grasped her by the back of her arms, pulling her slightly into his chest to keep her from falling over the edge.

"Woah, easy there kid."

Morrigan tensed in his grip at the minor pet name. She was so used to being alone that this tiny bit of attention had her torn between leaning in and pushing back, stuck in an awkward middle ground. God did he smell good though.

Morrigan physically shook her head to steady herself and stepped back from him on her own two feet. Morrigan murmured a thank you as the two parted. With a final smile down at Morrigan, Captain America guided them off the roof.

The activity inside was chaotic. Everyone was going somewhere in full sprints from one end of the campus to the other. The halls were filled with noise and commotion. Morrigan tried to pick her family out from the crowds but couldn't find them. She and Captain America worked their way towards central command, passing the large wall of glass overlooking the backside of the site. Morrigan strode with purpose, working to keep up with Steve's long strides.

Not fully paying attention, with her mind on the impending arrival, Morrigan nearly collided with the Captain as he stopped in his tracks looking outside.

"Is that an Akari out there? I thought everyone was supposed to come in?" He asked guiding Morrigan's attention to a cloaked figure out on the back landing.

Morrigan squinted at the person and recognized the details across the back shoulders. A ornate sun in brass embroidery glittered across the fabric.

"It looks like Evey," Morrigan answered, taking a step closer to the window.

"Do you see the embroidery on the back? Only the royal family has that. I'll go get her."

"I'll go with you." Captain America announced as Morrigan started for the door. Morrigan turned to him and placed a light touch to his arm holding him back.

"Can I maybe have a moment with my sister?" Morrigan asked, letting sweetness color her request.

"I'll meet you in central command. We'll be right there. I'll be right behind you."

As Morrigan spoke, Black Widow called out Steve's name and beckoned him to join the team. Captain American looked over his shoulder to command center and Morrigan gave him a nod when he looked back at her. Morrigan could see the battle in his eyes on if he should stay or go.

"I'll be fine, go. I promise I won't even cross the door frame" With a slight push, Morrigan sent him back to central command. Steve gave her a heavy look before leaving her side.

Morrigan cross the last few feet to the door and pushed the door open. It gave way easily and she slipped out into the evening air. Holding the door frame as she leaned out to catch her sister's attention.

"Evey? It's just about time. We need to go in now." Morrigan called out to her softly. She wasn't sure if her sister was in the middle of a spell or if she was just lingering outside. The air was still and the noise outside was deceptively peaceful. They had no idea that danger could be minutes away.

Evey, however, didn't turn at the sound of her sister's voice. Morrigan hung back just in the doorway for a moment longer before calling out again.

"Evey?" Morrigan's tone coated in confusion. Could she be upset? Had something happened to cause Evey to suddenly ignore her?

"Eebee?" Morrigan let herself use her childhood nickname, "Let's go, the ship is arriving any minute."

Without warning, Evey started walking quickly towards the forest ahead of her. Morrigan lept from the door frame to follow her. Where was she going? What was she thinking!? The ship would be here any second.

Evey showed no signs that she noticed or cared that Morrigan was chasing her down. Morrigan continued calling her name as she followed her across the open field. The only indication that she was even aware that Morrigan was there was to speed up if Morrigan started to gain ground. Morrigan had started the chase calling out her name that quickly became pleading for Evey to stop but Morrigan's words died on her lips once Evey crossed the threshold into the forest.

Morrigan stopped in her tracks. Every instinct called to her to turn and high tail out of there. Her mind raced, her body trembling, and her concern for her sister catapulted into fear now that she had been swallowed up by the advancing darkness in the woods.

"Evey? This isn't funny" Morrigan called out.

Morrigan waited for a moment. Then two. She looked behind her at the door she promised she wouldn't cross. She should go back. Captain and the others were waiting for her. But they would be waiting for Evey too. Did she leave her behind? She didn't go far but what if Evey needed her?

Biting her lip as she thought, she shook herself once and turned back to the forest. Bracing herself, Morrigan strode into the forest after her sister.

Morrigan has always loved the forest and if it were any other situation she would have loved to spend an afternoon getting lost in these trees. They reminded her of home. This forest was young, the treetops barely brushing limbs in the canopy overhead. The fading day was slowly giving way to the night.

With the sunlight dwindling Morrigan couldn't track her sister. As she walked she felt herself pushing down panic. She should be able to find her. Morrigan knew she wasn't more than a few feet behind her when she entered the forest. Evey couldn't have moved that fast. Unless- unless she wasn't there at all.

Spinning on her heel, Morrigan whirled to look behind her. There was nothing but trees and silence behind her. In fact, there wasn't any noise at all. The chatter of the evening was now as silent as the grave. Morrigan felt her hackles raise, something was wrong. She needed to get back.

"I must admit, this took you far longer than I'd hoped."

A voice called out from the forest around her. It seemed to have no origin, just like the voice from earlier. It sounded arrogant, posh even. Morrigan pulled the gun from her side, this was a voice she didn't recognize. She backed herself against the nearest tree for some semblance of protection. She held her ground there and waited to see who the voice belonged to. She knew she was on her own for this. No one would be looking for her yet.

"Where are you coward?" Morrigan cried out to the empty trees. "Why hide?"

"My dear, I'm not hiding at all."

The voice traveled on the whirl of the wind as it picked up Morrigan's hair before blasting out behind her. She stumbled forward and away from the tree from the force of the wind. A figure seemed to morph out of the shadows and over her shoulder.

Morrigan barely contained the shriek as she lept out of her skin, spinning away to put distance between herself and the stranger. She brought her handgun to chest height and aimed at the person now in front of her.

But it wasn't a person at all. It was a skeleton.

Or that's what the rational side of Morrigan thought. A lanky humanoid creature smirked down at her, grey eyes shining with amusement and malice. The look on it's face reminded her of her cousins when they trapped one of the smaller Akari in the training ring. Predatory.

Morrigan knew instantly that this was bad, really bad. She did the only thing she could think of. She fired her gun.

Years of training made it instinctive. She squared her feet, raised the gun, set her target, and squeezed the trigger. It all happened without thought and her aim was true. The bullet ricocheted out of the gun and blasted right between the creature's eyes.

Morrigan watched as it's skull misted apart and formed right back together before her eyes. Blood drained from her face as the creature merely looked annoyed at her behavior. Morrigan's gun fell heavily to her side while her second hand stifled the scream threatening to pour out of her mouth.

"Well, that was rude but no less than I should expect from an inbred Terran." The creature spoke with disdain. The smirk turning into a sneer that bordered on a feral snarl.

"You're plain-walking," Morrigan whispered in horror. This was wrong, this shouldn't be happening. Why didn't she stay inside?

"Ah yes, that is what you all call it isn't it. Pardon the illusions, your grace, I just wanted to be sure. Though now that I see you I feel foolish making them wait."

"Wait for what?" Morrigan asked, afraid of the answer. Her brain scrambled to catch up with what she was seeing.

"Oh, well, for this your grace." He chirped, almost cheerfully. A gleeful smile on his face as he raised a relaxed arm up and pointed behind Morrigan.

The skeletal man's gesture directed Morrigan to gaze at the night sky behind her. Turning from the projection in front of her, Morrigan turned and looked above her to where he had pointed.

Six pinpricks in the distance appeared above the campus. Smaller than stars at first but rapidly growing in size and intensity. A howling filled the air as the objects broke the atmosphere. Billowing clouds of smoke hiding the night sky behind the bright fireballs. Morrigan gasped in wide-eyed horror as the night sky grew brighter than the day. The deafening roar filling her ears and silent tears blurred her vision. Dropping to her knees she watched, helpless, as fire engulfed them all.

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