

# ***"IT CAN'T ALL BE SORROW"***

***CONFRONTING TRAUMA THROUGH TELEVISION IN MARVEL'S WANDA VISION***

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY  
***BRYAN BOVE***









WHEN WANDAVISION  
PREMIERED ON  
JANUARY 15, 2021 -

(FILMED BEFORE A LIVE STUDIO AUDIENCE)

- THE WORLD WAS NEARLY A YEAR  
INTO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

OVER FOUR-HUNDRED  
THOUSAND DEATHS  
WERE REPORTED IN  
THE UNITED STATES,

AND THE NUMBERS CONTINUED  
TO CLIMB DURING THE SHOW'S  
EIGHT - WEEK RUN.\*

(DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL.)



(\*COVID DATA TRACKER)





IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC,  
MY 2<sup>ND</sup> YEAR OF A PhD PROGRAM,  
AND OTHER PERSONAL TURMOIL -

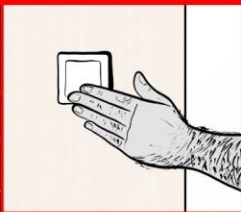
- I LOOKED FORWARD TO THE  
SERIES EVERY FRIDAY -

- BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF  
THE FEW THINGS THAT TOOK  
MY MIND OFF THE WORLD.

AND THE NUMBERS CONTINUED  
TO CLIMB DURING THE SHOW'S  
EIGHT - WEEK RUN.

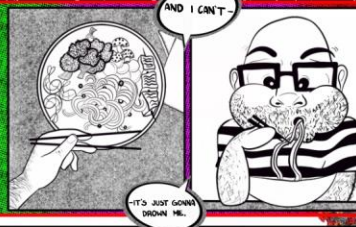
HONESTLY, THIS IS AN  
INTRO CLASS. DO NOT  
STRESS ABOUT IT.  
IT'S GOING TO BE  
EASY.

I WOULD WAKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE NIGHT TO USE THE BATHROOM -



- AND STAY AWAKE TO WATCH THE LATEST EPISODE.

THEN I'D WATCH IT  
AGAIN LATER IN THE  
DAY WHEN I ATE LUNCH -



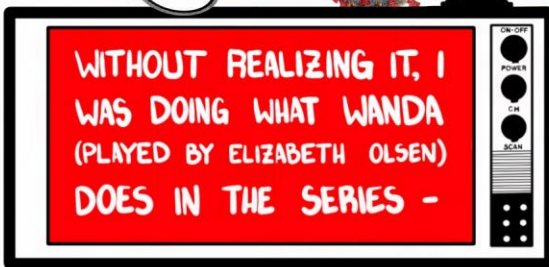
AND I CAN'T -

IT'S JUST GOING  
DOWN ME.

- AFTER WATCHING  
PREVIOUS EPISODES  
IN THE MORNING  
WHILE I WORKED.



WITHOUT REALIZING IT, I  
WAS DOING WHAT WANDA  
(PLAYED BY ELIZABETH OLSEN)  
DOES IN THE SERIES -



- USING TELEVISION  
TO COPE,  
TO ESCAPE,  
TO KEEP FROM DROWNING  
IN MY OWN TRAUMA.





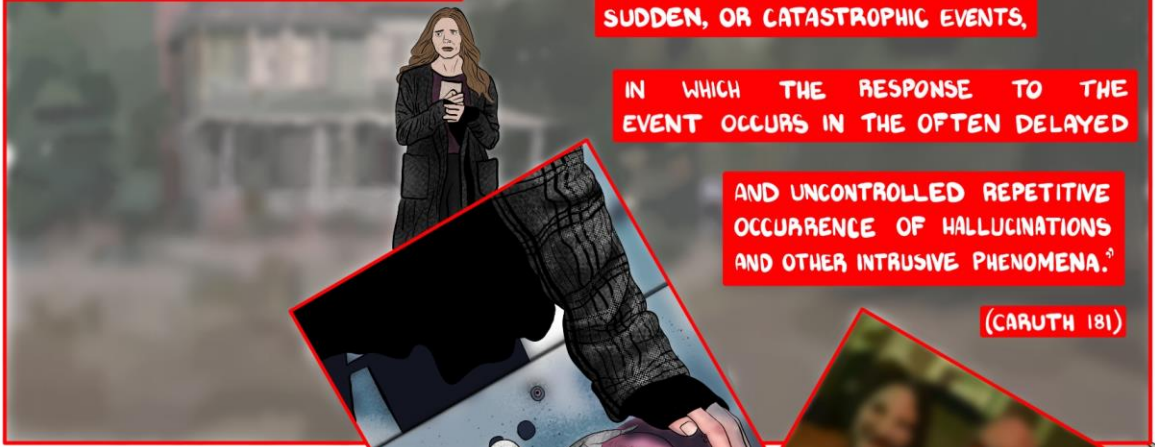
IN "UNCLAIMED EXPERIENCE: TRAUMA AND THE POSSIBILITY OF HISTORY," CATHY CARUTH DEFINES TRAUMA AS —

— "AN OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE OF SUDDEN, OR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS,

IN WHICH THE RESPONSE TO THE EVENT OCCURS IN THE OFTEN DELAYED

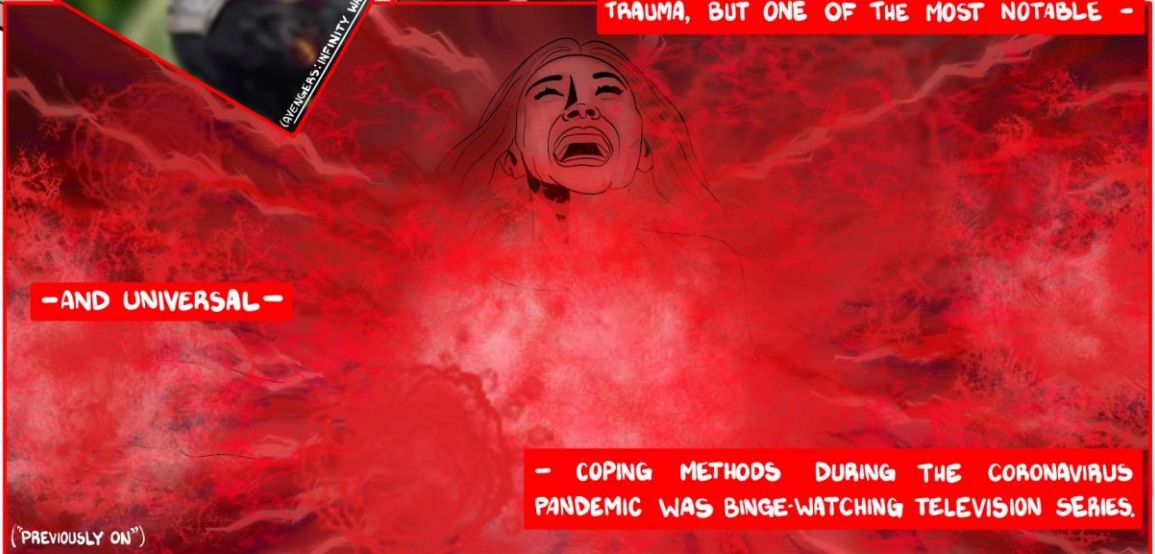
AND UNCONTROLLED REPETITIVE OCCURRENCE OF HALLUCINATIONS AND OTHER INTRUSIVE PHENOMENA.<sup>9</sup>

(CARUTH 181)



THERE ARE MANY WAYS PEOPLE COPE WITH TRAUMA, BUT ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE —

—AND UNIVERSAL—



— COPING METHODS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC WAS BINGE-WATCHING TELEVISION SERIES.









WANDAVISION TAKES THE IDEA OF DÉJÀ VIEWING TO ANOTHER LEVEL, WITH THE PROTAGONIST WANDA MAXIMOFF MAGICALLY RECONFIGURING THE TOWN OF WESTVIEW, NEW JERSEY INTO HER OWN SITCOM-BASED REALITY TO ESCAPE THE TRAUMA OF HER LIFE.

IN DOING SO, HER SHOW-WITHIN-A-SHOW FOSTERS HER NEGOTIATION OF POWER AND (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF SELF, ULTIMATELY ALLOWING HER TO PERSEVERE IN THE REAL WORLD.



THE SERIES' DEPICTION OF HER JOURNEY BECOMES EVEN MORE NUANCED AND COMPLEX WHEN EXAMINED FROM A CRIP FEMINIST TRAUMA STUDIES PERSPECTIVE.



IN "CRIP FEMINIST TRAUMA STUDIES IN JESSICA JONES AND BEYOND" (2019), H. RAKES ENGAGES WITH CLEMENTINE MORRIGAN'S "TRAUMA AS POSSIBILITY" (2016) AND ALLISON KAFER'S POLITICAL-RELATIONAL MODEL OF DISABILITY FROM HER WORK FEMINIST, QUEER, CRIP (2013) —



—TO ESTABLISH THEIR CRIP FEMINIST TRAUMA STUDIES FRAMEWORK, WHICH ALLOWS FOR A MORE INTERSECTIONAL, POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE ON DISABILITY, INCLUSIVE OF INVISIBLE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FREQUENTLY IGNORED BY TRADITIONAL DISABILITY STUDIES.



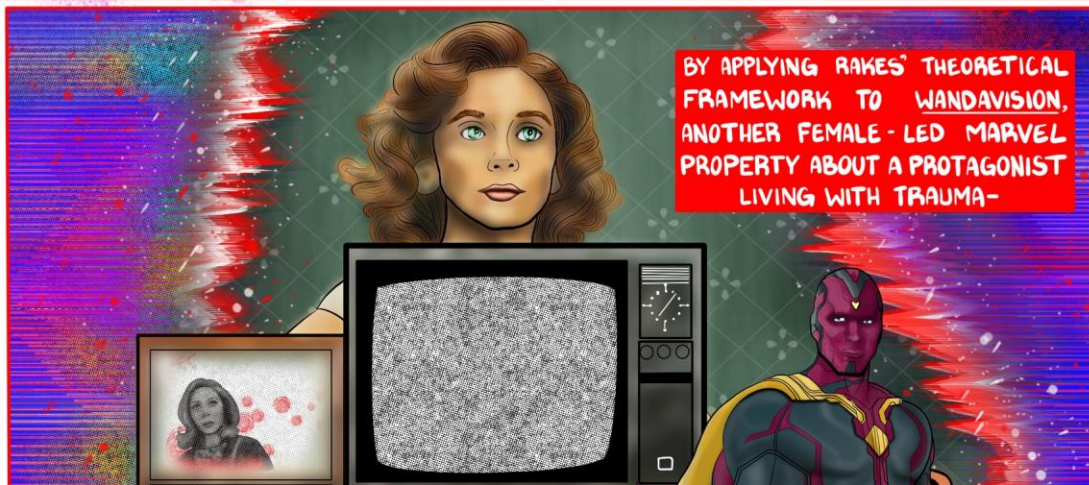
ANALYZING THE TELEVISION SERIES JESSICA JONES (2015-2019) THROUGH THIS LENS, RAKES DISCUSSES THE RELATIONSHIPS THE TITULAR HERO FORMS IN AND THROUGH HER DISABILITY — HER PTSD FROM HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE VILLAIN KILGRAVE.

RAKES NOTES THAT, UNLIKE OTHER DISABLED HEROES—



— JESSICA'S DISABILITY IS NOT CANCELED OUT BY HER SUPERPOWERS; RATHER, IT EXISTS ALONGSIDE HER SUPERPOWERS AND MAKES THEM POSSIBLE.\*

\*(RAKES 79-80)



BY APPLYING RAKES' THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO WANDA VISION, ANOTHER FEMALE-LED MARVEL PROPERTY ABOUT A PROTAGONIST LIVING WITH TRAUMA—

—WE CAN FURTHER DEVELOP THIS IDEA THAT TRAUMA-AS-DISABILITY CREATES RATHER THAN NEGATES THE POSSIBILITIES OF POWER —

—AND RELATIONSHIPS.



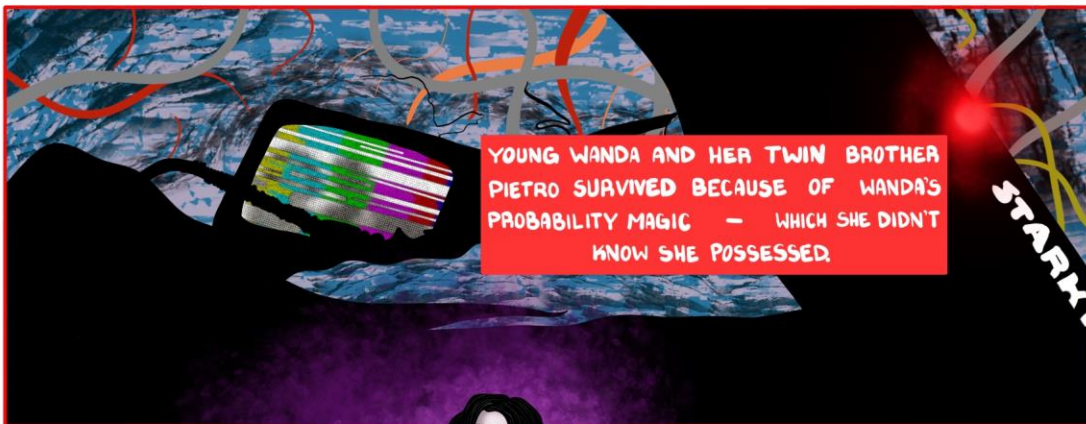


IN "PREVIOUSLY ON," THE WITCH AGATHA HARKNESS - PLAYED BY KATHRYN HAHN - TAKES WANDA ON A JOURNEY THROUGH HER MEMORIES TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF WANDA'S POWER.

IT'S TIME TO LOOK AT SOME REAL RERUNS.

THE VIEWER LEARNS HOW WANDA USED TO WATCH OLD TV SERIES LIKE THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW (1961-1966) WITH HER FAMILY TO PRACTICE THEIR ENGLISH-

-UNTIL HER PARENTS WERE KILLED IN AN EXPLOSION.



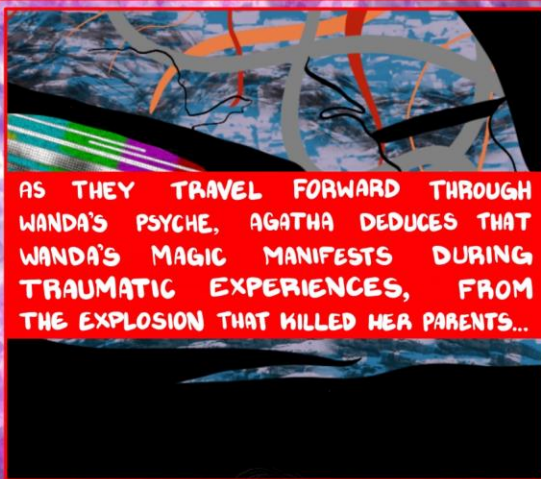
YOUNG WANDA AND HER TWIN BROTHER PIETRO SURVIVED BECAUSE OF WANDA'S PROBABILITY MAGIC - WHICH SHE DIDN'T KNOW SHE POSSESSED.



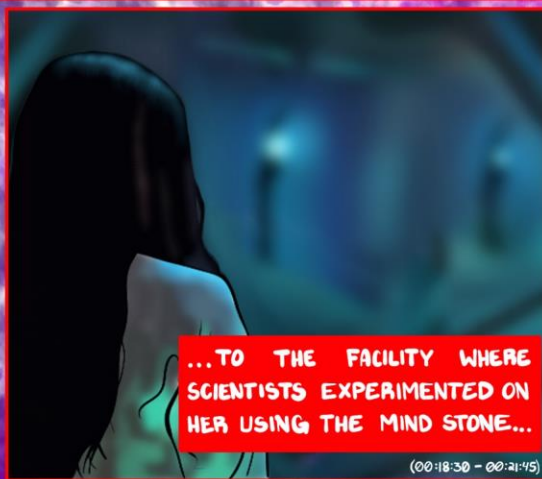
SO, WHAT I SEE HERE IS A BABY WITCH, OBSESSED WITH SITCOMS, AND **YEARS** OF THERAPY AHEAD OF HER.

("PREVIOUSLY ON" 00:11:09 - 00:17:30)





AS THEY TRAVEL FORWARD THROUGH WANDA'S PSYCHE, AGATHA DEDUCES THAT WANDA'S MAGIC MANIFESTS DURING TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES, FROM THE EXPLOSION THAT KILLED HER PARENTS...



...TO THE FACILITY WHERE SCIENTISTS EXPERIMENTED ON HER USING THE MIND STONE...

(00:18:30 - 00:21:45)



... TO THE REALIZATION THAT SHE'D LOST HER ROMANTIC PARTNER, VISION-

-PLAYED BY PAUL BETTANY.



I CAN'T FEEL YOU

(00:30:00 - 00:31:04)

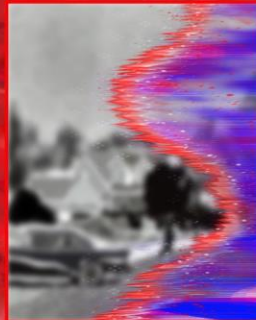


(00:33:25 - 00:34:15)





AGATHA'S THEORY PROVES TRUE AS WANDA, DROWNING IN HER SADNESS, RELEASES A LOUD CRY -



- TURNING WESTVIEW INTO A REALITY BASED ON SITCOMS THAT HAVE COMFORTED HER THROUGH HER TRAUMA, BRINGING VISION BACK TO "LIFE" IN THE PROCESS.



("PREVIOUSLY ON" 00:31:15-00:33:45)

WANDA USING HER CHAOS MAGIC TO CREATE AN IMAGINED PRESENT-



-COMPLETE WITH A FAMILY-



-AND AN ENTIRE NETWORK OF NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS-



- ILLUSTRATES THE POSSIBILITIES PRODUCED IN AND THROUGH TRAUMA-



-AS WELL AS THE CHARACTER'S NEED FOR CONNECTION IN HER MELANCHOLIA.



IN "LOVE BEFORE AND AFTER THEY CAME BACK," SARAH A. SMITH  
RAINEY DISCUSSES TRAUMA, DISABILITY, AND MELANCHOLIA IN  
ROBIN CAMPILLO'S 2004 FILM THEY CAME BACK (LES REVENANTS).

REFERENCING FREUD'S "OUTLINE OF  
MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA," RAINEY  
ASSETS THAT "THE MELANCHOLIC  
TRAPS THE LOST OBJECT INSIDE." \*

IN WANDAVISION, WANDA INADVERTENTLY  
TRAPS HERSELF INSIDE HER ALTERNATE  
REALITY WITH THE IMAGINED FUTURE SHE LOST-

-AND WITH CONNECTIONS SHE'S FABRICATED.



\*(SMITH RAINEY 30)



WANDA'S CREATION OF CONNECTIONS BASED ON MEMORIES AND FICTION HIGHLIGHTS THE FAILURES OF HER REAL - WORLD RELATIONSHIPS. AS A VIEWER, ONE CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHERE THE OTHER AVENGERS ARE, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE HIGHLY - PERFORMATIVE MOMENTS OF SISTERHOOD-

- IN AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR (2017) -



(01:55:52)

SHE'S NOT ALONE.

- AND AVENGERS: ENDGAME (2019).



(02:27:06)

SHE'S GOT HELP.

THIS FRUSTRATION OVER THE AVENGERS SHOWING NO CONCERN FOR WANDA IS INTENSIFIED WHEN CONSIDERING THE NARRATIVE OF THE SERIES THE FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER (2021) IN WHICH WE SEE BUCKY - WHO IS NO STRANGER TO TRAUMA -



- ATTENDING THERAPY AND IGNORING TEXT MESSAGES FROM SAM -

("NEW WORLD ORDER")



("THE STAR-SPANGLED MAN")

- BEFORE ULTIMATELY TEAMING UP WITH HIM FOR A MISSION.





VIEWING WANDA FROM A CRIP FEMINIST TRAUMA PERSPECTIVE ALLOWS US TO SEE HOW HER ONGOING TRAUMA IS EXACERBATED BY THESE RELATIONAL CONDITIONS, AND TO UNDERSTAND WHY WANDA WOULD CREATE HER OWN REALITY BASED ON HER COMFORT TELEVISION TO WORK IN AND THROUGH HER GRIEF



IN "ON A VERY SPECIAL EPISODE," THE 5<sup>TH</sup> EPISODE OF THE SERIES, THE LESSON WANDA IMPARTS TO HER TWINS AFTER THE DEATH OF THEIR DOG -





THIS SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE COULD BE THE RESULT OF HER MODIFIED DÉJÀ VIEWING, BUT IT COULD ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO REVISITING A POIGNANT MOMENT WITH VISION IN THE AVENGERS' COMPOUND AFTER PIETRO'S DEATH—



I'M SO TIRED. IT'S JUST LIKE THIS WAVE WASHING OVER ME AGAIN AND AGAIN. IT KNOCKS ME DOWN, AND WHEN I TRY TO STAND UP, IT JUST COMES FOR ME AGAIN. AND I CAN'T—



—IT'S JUST GONNA DROWN ME.

NO—

—YEAH.

NO IT WON'T.

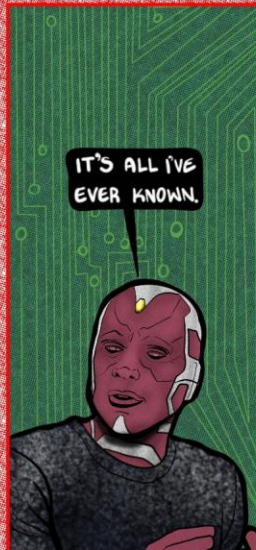
HOW DO YOU KNOW?



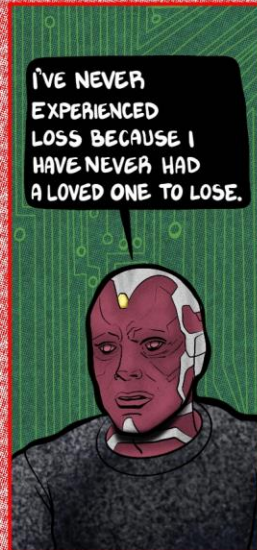
WELL, BECAUSE IT CAN'T ALL BE SORROW. CAN IT?



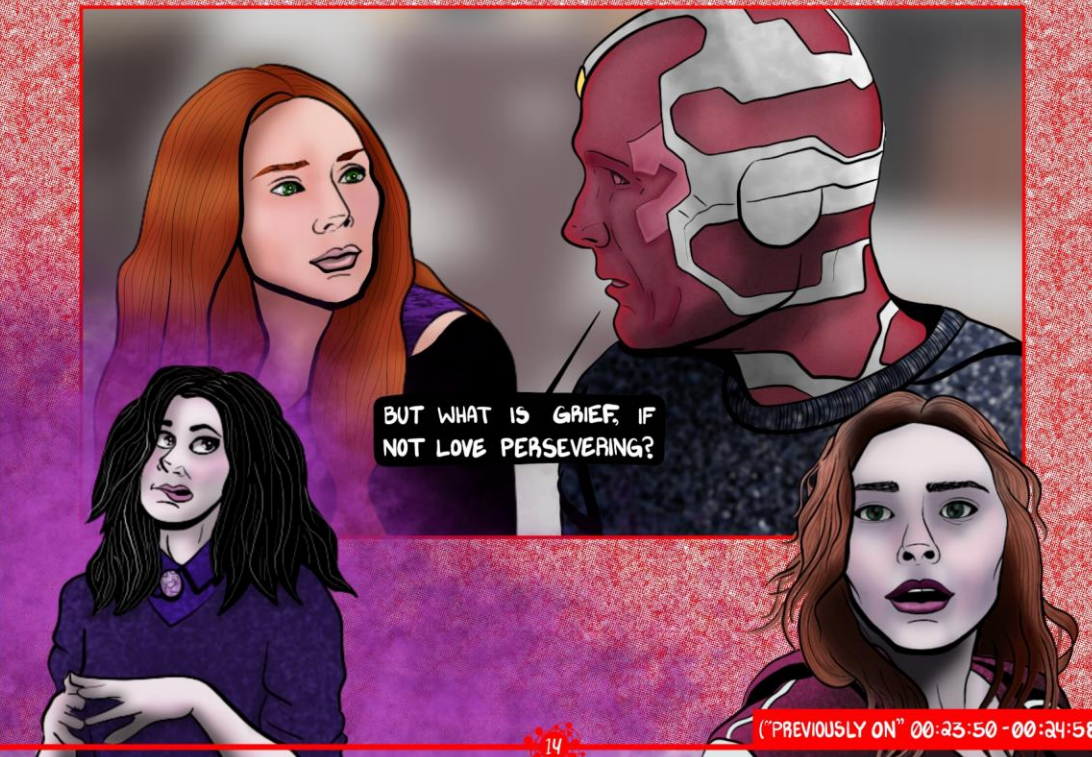
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE, SO I DON'T FEEL THE LACK.



IT'S ALL I'VE EVER KNOWN.



I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED LOSS BECAUSE I HAVE NEVER HAD A LOVED ONE TO LOSE.



BUT WHAT IS GRIEF, IF NOT LOVE PERSEVERING?



-AND THE REVELATION THAT WANDA IS THE SCARLET WITCH, A FABLED FIGURE DESCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF MAGIC KNOWN AS THE DARKHOLD.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW DANGEROUS YOU ARE. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A MYTH. A BEING CAPABLE OF SPONTANEOUS CREATION -

- AND HERE YOU ARE, USING IT TO MAKE BREAKFAST FOR DINNER.

LET GO OF MY CHILDREN!

OH YES, YOUR CHILDREN. AND VISION. AND THIS WHOLE LITTLE LIFE YOU MADE. THIS IS CHAOS MAGIC, WANDA.

AND THAT MAKES YOU THE SCARLET WITCH.

(PREVIOUSLY ON " 00:37:23-00:37:58)

ALTHOUGH WANDA'S POWERS WERE NOT CREATED IN HER TRAUMA, IT WAS HER TRAUMA THAT ALLOWED HER TO DISCOVER THE TRUE NATURE OF HER MAGIC.

IN "THE SERIES FINALE," WANDA DEMONSTRATES A NEW LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OVER HER POWER, DEFEATING AGATHA USING AUNE MAGIC FROM THE DARKHOLD -

I DON'T NEED YOU TO TELL ME WHO I AM.

(00:26:40-00:27:00)

-AND ENDING HER SPELL ON WESTVIEW.

I KNOW YOU'LL SET EVERYTHING RIGHT. JUST NOT FOR US.

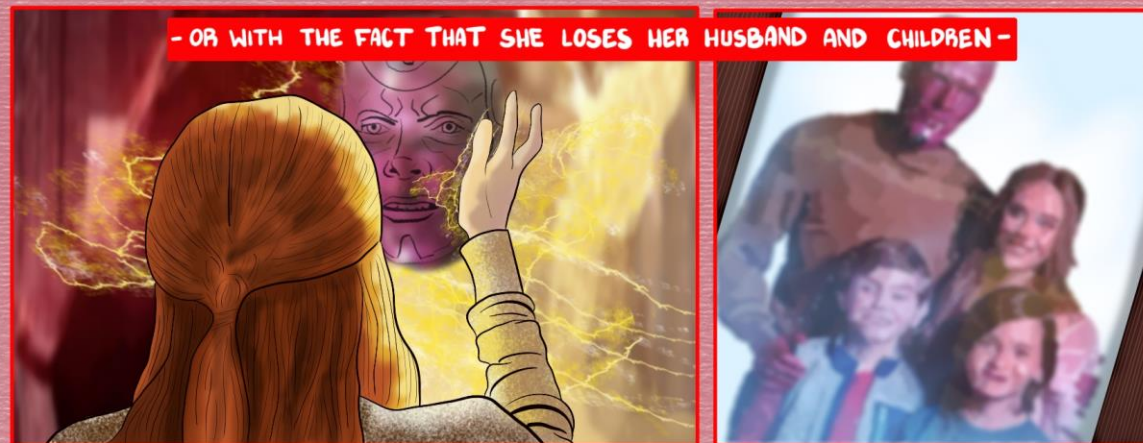
NO. NOT FOR US.

HMM. IT'S TIME. SHOULD WE HEAD HOME?

YEAH.

(00:30:06-00:30:25)







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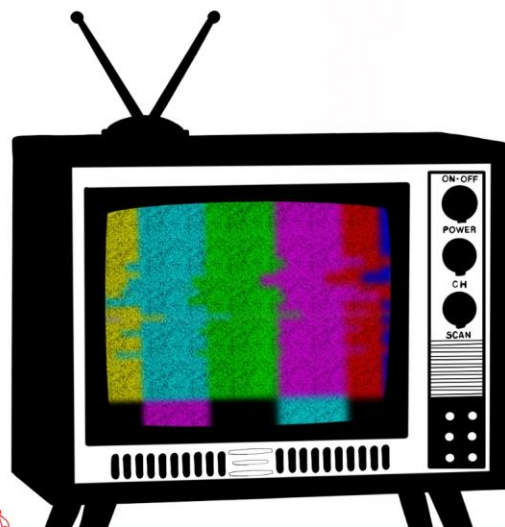
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