Summary

Loki is destined to bring about the destruction of the realms by helping Thanos gain the Infinity Gauntlet. He is given the chance to change his fate and possibly that of the entire universe, but he cannot do it alone.
Stoki has been one of my obsessions for a while now. I was inspired by the song "My heart I surrender" by iPrevail. This story came to be based on that song and the scene that I imagined playing out around it.

The story is only somewhat cannon compliant at the beginning. Each Chapter will have a song that goes with it since it was originally inspired by a song.

It is told in a series of interactions that take place each day. The timeline is counted in relation to Day 1 and flows chronologically.
Chapter 1 Prologue

Chapter 1

Freewill

Rush

There are those who think that life has nothing left to chance
A host of holy horrors to direct our aimless dance
A planet of play things
We dance on the strings
Of powers we cannot perceive
The stars aren't aligned
Or the gods are malign...
Blame is better to give than receive
You can choose a ready guide in some celestial voice
If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice
You can choose from phantom fears and kindness that can kill
I will choose a path that's clear
I will choose freewill
There are those who think
That they were dealt a losing hand
The cards were stacked against them
They weren't born in Lotusland
All preordained
A prisoner in chains
A victim of venomous fate
Kicked in the face
You can't pray for a place
In heaven's unearthly estate
Each of us
A cell of awareness
Imperfect and incomplete
Genetic blends
With uncertain ends
On a fortune hunt that's far too fleet

A millennia prior to Day 1

Queen Frigga of Asgard cradles the bundle in her arms. She gazes down at the baby with the bright green eyes. The Queen cannot deny the maternal pull she feels towards the child Odin had placed in her arms upon returning from the Jotunheim, but it is mixed with the feeling of foreboding that she has sensed since first laying eyes on the dark haired child.
The workings required to glimpse into the future are complicated and dangerous. Only to be attempted by one with great skill. Frigga has thousands of years of experience to draw upon and after hours of preparation she is ready.

Closing her eyes she takes a breath to center herself and looks forward, into the future. The feeling of foreboding increases as she see's flashes of the child's life. Pain, heartache and death surround him and her heart breaks with the knowledge of the child's impending fate.

Frigga opens her eyes again to look upon the cherubic face and she knows. As a mother she will do anything for this child, her Loki.

She places her son in his basinet and watches him sleep, then opens the way to Yggdrasil and steps through. She will beg, if need be, for a chance to change his future, if the fates will be so kind.

When she returns to the nursery, the baby continues to sleep, blissfully unaware of the chance that has been given to him.

6 months prior to Day 1

"Frigga, Queen of Asgard, a millennia ago you begged us to intercede on your son's behalf. We are merely observers in the cosmos. As such, it is against our very being to interfere with the workings of time. However, we chose to intervene in this instance because not to do so would mean the destruction of all we know."

"As we told you then, we cannot directly alter Loki's path, but we have provided a means by which he may alter it himself and the time has come for these events to unfold. Loki is enslaved to the anger and hatred in his heart. He must free himself and to do this he will need an ally. Look to Midgard and he will find what he needs." An image appears before the 3 hooded figures; circular in shape with red, silver and blue concentric circles and a white star in the middle.

Frigga wakes from her dream and blinks her eyes at the light streaming in from the window. She gets out of bed and hurriedly dresses then enters Yggdrasil.

The Queen reappears directly in front of the gatekeeper, "have you seen him?"

"No my queen, the prince is still hidden from my view," he responds.

The daily reports from Heimdall are heartbreaking. When he has nothing to report she feels the sense of loss just as she did the day Loki fell from the bifrost, but worse are the days when he catches site of him. The unspeakable suffering and pain that her youngest son endures is almost too much for her to bear and yet she does.

"Turn your gaze to Midgard, Heimdall," she instructs him. "It will not be long, he will come back to me."

"As you wish. I only worry about the condition he will be in when he does return. He will not be the boy you remember," the gatekeeper warns.

"He hasn't been that boy ever since he learned of our deceit."

Frigga turns and heads back to the palace. She needs time to think about what she should do next.
4 months prior to Day 1

It is a beautiful day in Washington DC. The National Mall is teeming with people. A gust of wind blows through the grounds as the skies begin to darken. A flash of lighting followed by the crash of thunder heralds the arrival of Thor, God of Thunder.

The blonde muscular man is dressed in his Asgardian armor and holds Mjolnir loosely in his hand. People eye him warily, keeping their distance. In return, he nods almost politely and smiles, trying and failing to look casual. Thor turns to a young boy gaping, open mouthed, as his mother tries to drag him away by the arm.

“Hello there,” he smiles, then turns and takes in the rest of his surroundings. He knows he only needs to wait and he will be found. It doesn’t take long before several black SUV’s arrive. They drive across the grass and walking paths to surround him. Thor smiles brightly as a familiar face steps out of one of the vehicles.

“Thor! We were not expecting you back to Earth so soon,” Agent Coulson greets.

“I come with greetings and with information from Asgard,” Thor says.

Agent Coulson gestures for Thor to follow him as he gets back in his SUV. “Let’s go to SHIELD headquarters. If you have news you should probably speak to the Director.”

When they arrive at the facility, Agent Coulson leads Thor to an office where they are greeted by a large dark skinned man wearing all black, sitting behind an equally large desk. “Director Fury,” Agent Coulson says in greeting, “This is Thor, of Asgard.”

“Greetings Director Fury. I come bearing information from Asgard.”

Director Fury quirks an eyebrow and gestures for both men to take a seat. “What is this information?”

Thor proceeds to give a quick explanation of the events leading up to the destruction of the bifrost. “When the bifrost started to break apart, Loki and I both fell. Odin could have saved us both, but he let go….” Thor pauses in his story, the grief of watching his brother fall into the abyss still fresh. “We thought he was dead. I begged Heimdall to search for any sightings, but we were sure no one could have survived the abyss.”

“I take it that you are here to tell us that your brother is alive,” Fury cuts in.

“He may be. Heimdall has seen glimpses. Images of Loki. They are unsettling. The Allfather thinks it unlikely that Loki will return to Asgard, but my mother has reason to believe he may set his sights on Midgard. If he does come here we do not know what state his mind or body will be. The bifrost has only recently been restored. Heimdall will continue to watch for Loki.”

“Unsettling? Do you think he will be a problem for us?” Coulson asks.

“I can’t answer that, but the abyss is not meant to be survived. If he is truly alive, it cannot be without great cost,” Thor says as he stands and makes to leave. “If you have warriors, now may be the time to prepare.”

After escorting Thor to the roof where he calls for Heimdall, Coulson returns back to Director Fury’s office.

“What do you think sir?”
“I think it’s time,” Fury responds as he pulls a file from his desk drawer and slides it across to Agent Coulson.

Coulson picks up the file and reads the words on the front, “Avengers Initiative.”

2 Months Prior to Day 1

Thor is once again standing in Washington DC waiting to be picked up when a bright red Lamborghini pulls up. A dark haired man with intricately cut facial hair looks over the top of his expensive sunglasses, “Tony Stark,” the man says in greeting, “get in Thunder dome. Fury will be waiting for us.” The blonde god is perplexed by the man, but he gets in the sports car.

When Tony finally pulls into the parking garage at the Triskelion he jumps out of the car and waits for Thor to climb out. “You pilot this vehicle like a madman.”

Tony only laughs as he leads the way to the elevator that will take them to Director Fury’s office.

When they reach the correct floor Tony breezes past the receptionist and barges into the Directors office, ”Ok I delivered point break to you, am I done here?”

Fury looks at the 2 men and gestures for them to sit at the conference table, “have a seat.”

Thor takes this opportunity to speak up, “I am anxious to hear about the warriors you have assembled,” Thor tells them as he places Mjolnir on the table and takes a seat.

“Good, the rest of the team will be here shortly. I think you’ll be pleased.”

Later that evening, back on Asgard, Thor goes to his mother’s gardens to seek her out. He finds her sitting on the bench beneath her favorite tree. Loki often sat with her here when he was a boy. The blonde approaches quietly knowing that Frigga only lingers here when she is missing her younger son.

“Mother, I have word from Midgard. They have assembled a team of warriors they call Avengers.”

“Tell me of these warriors my son.”

“They are quite extraordinary for Midgardians. Among them are 2 assassins, a man with a marvelous metal suit of armor, a scientist with a monster within and a super soldier.”

Frigga offers a small smile, “and who leads this team? Is it you?”

“No, I am not on Midgard enough to effectively lead them and they have a strong leader in the super soldier, Captain Rogers. He is enhanced for a Midgardian and fights with little more than a red and blue shield with a big star in the middle. It is something to behold. He is quite a formidable sparring partner.” Frigga turns to look at her son, who is oblivious to her sudden interest.

“It sounds like you admire him a great deal,” Frigga states trying to hold back her growing excitement.

Thor grins and nods his head, “I would be honored to fight under his lead.”

“Tell me, my son, who assembled this team together?”
“A man named Fury. I met him when I returned to Midgard recently. He leads an organization called SHIELD.”

50 days prior to Day 1

“I see him. He sits in his home.”

“Show me. Is there anyone else with him?”

“No, my Queen. He is alone. Do you wish me to send you to him?”

“No, thank you, Heimdall. I will use Yggdrasil so as to not draw attention,” she answers as she opens the way and steps through.

Nick Fury is sitting in his living room, having just arrived home when a tall regal looking woman appears before him. After many years of being a spy he has learned to hide his surprise and so he does not react outwardly.

“Director Fury, I am Frigga, Queen of Asgard. I believe you know my son Thor.”

Inwardly he heaves a sigh of relief as he looks the queen over, “yes I know him.”

“He speaks highly of you and the team you have assembled.”

“You mean the team we assembled to combat your other son?” he challenges as he stands and gestures for her to sit in the chair beside the couch.

The Queen nods and takes the offered seat. “Yes, which is why I am here,” she tells him. "Both of my sons are very passionate, ruled by their hearts, which normally serves them well, but Loki is filled with anger and hate, brought on by the failures of myself and the King.” Frigga pauses to compose herself. Director Fury waits patiently for her to continue.

“If things stay as they are there will be great darkness in the universe and Loki will be instrumental in bringing it about. However, his fate is not yet sealed. With help, my son can change his destiny.”

“Help from whom, exactly?”

“I have seen a vision. In it was this,” she pulls out a piece of parchment with a drawing of a red and blue shield with a white star in the middle.

“Captain Rogers? How is he supposed to help?”

“That I do not know. I can only say that when Loki arrives on Midgard you must ensure that he crosses paths with Captain Rogers. After that, it will be up to them.”

“I see. Tell me more about your son.”

Frigga tells him about Loki’s power, fighting skills and knack for planning and strategy. It is clear to Fury that she loves both of her sons dearly, but even from their short conversation he can tell that Frigga holds Loki nearer to her heart.

As she is preparing to leave, Frigga rests her hand on Director Fury’s arm, “I cannot stress enough
that my visit here cannot be known. It is imperative that Loki and Captain Rogers meet and that we try to refrain from further influencing after that. Loki is being given this chance to change his fate, we must allow his new path to unfold, lest we make things worse.”

“Yes ma’am. I can promise Captain Rogers will cross paths with your son should he appear on Earth.”

15 days prior to day 1
Stuttgart
Loki, God of Mischief, stands before a crowd of people. He surveys the people before him, taking his time, waiting for the next phase of the plan to begin.

“You were made to be ruled. In the end, you will always kneel,” Loki tells the cowering crowd of people before him.

A lone elderly man still stands defiantly. “Not to men like you.”

“There are no men like me.” Loki turns to address the crowd, “look to your elder, people. Let him be an example.” He raises the scepter and sends a blast of deadly energy towards the man. Before it can hit its mark, a man in red, white and blue leaps in front and deflects the beam.

“You know, the last time I was in Germany and saw a man standing above everybody else, we ended up disagreeing,” Captain America tells Loki as he stands and begins to stalk around him.

“The Soldier. A man out of time,” Loki sneers and then he is lost to the battle and it is glorious. The Captain is more than a challenge and Loki relishes every moment, every exchanged blow, every blocked punch. He knows the plan, knows what he is supposed to do. Let them win, let them take you….

A small act of defiance against those who would control him, he fights on, observing the Captain’s every move, taking in his form, his technique. Watching his body move with grace and purpose. A worthy opponent…. He is so distracted watching the Captain that he does not block the blast from Iron Man’s repulsor and he is hit square in the back, knocking him off his feet.

Let them win, let them take you….

The Captain is on him in an instant, straddling him, and raising his shield, he brings it down in a glancing blow to the side of Loki’s head. The god is momentarily stunned as he looks up at the Captain from the ground, his mind clear for the first time since falling from the bifrost. Loki narrows his eyes at the Captain who is still sitting on his hips. The look on the Captains face is stern and focused, but gradually changes to bewilderment the longer Loki stares at him. Just as he opens his mouth to say something, Loki vanishes.

The Captain doesn’t move for several moments. He stares at the spot on the ground where Loki had just been. Did his eyes change from blue to green? The Captain can feel it in his gut that something important has just happened. He is so wrapped up thinking about Loki that he fails to notice Iron Man’s approach. “Hey Spangles, you planning on just sitting there?”

“What? Oh, uh, no,” he stammers as he stands back up and begins to walk towards the quinjet that the Black Widow has brought. It’s a long flight home so he tries to get some sleep, but his dreams are haunted by images of dark black hair and bright green eyes.
14 Days prior to Day 1

Loki is standing in a cave before an underground spring. Facing him are 3 figures. Their features are obscured by the faint glow that emanates from each one. The foremost one lifts her head in greeting as he takes a step forward. “Loki, yours is a future full of chance. Long ago your path was altered to allow a divergence. You have taken the first step on your journey. Your mind has been freed, but there is more work yet to be done.”

“What must I do,” the god asks.

The figure raises her hand and 3 orbs of light appear above her palm. They twist and spin, suspended in air. The red, white and blue orbs coalesce into one with a blinding flash. As the light dies down only one orb remains, this one green, glowing strong in her hand.

“Your mind has been freed, but just as you needed the Captain to clear your head you will need help for your heart and your soul.”

Loki wakes in the warehouse he has been using as a base of operations. He takes the time to assess his wounds. Most are superficial, with the worst being a cut to the side of his head where he was struck by Captain America’s shield. He gingerly touches the wound and hisses from the sting. The god can tell the wound is already healing and so he relaxes back in his chair and begins to go over the battle in his head again. He knows he didn’t do what he was sent to do and there will be consequences for failing. He knows and yet he cannot quite bring himself to really care at the moment. He wants nothing more than to rest some more, but first, he must talk to Barton.

Clint Barton is angry. His thoughts are not his own. When he sleeps, he dreams. He is being tortured, but it’s not really him. When he wakes he is exhausted and not in control of his actions, but that is often times preferable to the dreams. He wants this to end. He hates the man who has control of his mind. Hates what has been done to both of them. Hates what he watches himself do, while trapped inside his own body.

He sits in the warehouse and tries to resist, tries not to give Loki the answers he is asking for, but his cooperation was never in doubt. From the moment Loki touched that scepter to his chest, his will was no longer his own.

His head is throbbing, he feels the urge to vomit, is shaking and drenched in sweat. His resistance is at an end and finally he cracks. Loki can see it when it happens. “Tell me everything. I will know Captain America.”

And so he does.

When he has nothing left to say, Loki leaves him to head to Asgard and Barton falls into a deep and blissfully dreamless sleep. Upon waking, he finds Loki sitting on a simple metal chair staring off into space. With a quick look around he realizes the other people that Loki had taken when he first arrived are all gone. Loki seems to shake himself and looks to Clint, “Ah Agent Barton, you are the last. All the others have been returned. I need an aircraft.”
12 Days before Day 1

Steve is dreaming. This time it is different. *Just as the plane slips below the ice and the water begins to fill his lungs, he see’s a set of intense green eyes staring at him from the dark of the water.* He wakes with a gasp and lays there staring at the ceiling unable to go back to sleep.

10 days prior to Day 1

**SHIELD Helicarrier**

“Sir, we have an inbound aircraft, origin unknown.”

Director Fury moves from where he was standing overlooking the bridge of the helicarrier to look at the screen where the young tech is seated. “Try to raise them.”

“I’ve been trying to sir.”

Fury sighs quietly to himself then reaches forward to toggle the mic, “unidentified aircraft, you have strayed into protected airspace. Turn back along your previous trajectory.” He pauses, waiting for any response or indication that his directive will be heeded. When there is no response he leans forward and hits the toggle again, “I repeat, you have strayed into protected airspace. Turn your aircraft around or we will be forced to fire upon you.”

Fury is fully not expecting a response and so he turns towards the weapons station when a voice comes back over the speaker, “this is aircraft D-5831 requesting emergency landing.”

“Landing request denied. Turn back or be fired upon,” Fury warns.

“Aircraft D-5831 requesting emergency landing. Authorization Delta Niner One Zulu Echo three.”

Fury looks back to the tech who is quickly trying to verify the code. His eyes go wide as he indicates for Fury to look at the verification.

Director Fury’s heart speeds up a little as he reaches for the toggle again. “Agent Barton, you are cleared to land on landing strip A.” He turns to his head of security, “get a team up there now.”

And now Clint Barton is confused. Did he black out and why is he on this helicarrier?

3 days prior to Day 1

The god of mischief is getting frustrated. He is growing tired of these mortals. After Barton landed the aircraft on the helicarrier, Loki released him from his control. He is fairly sure Barton will have no lasting effects from the blow to the head that knocked him out, but it was necessary to release the scepters hold. The god then surrendered without incident and now he has been sitting here for a week. His request is simple. Why can’t they just get him what he wants?

*Steve is following someone through a crowd. He can only catch glimpses of the man with raven colored hair as he maneuvers through the throngs of people. It is as if the people know to avoid him*
and he passes by easily, but as Steve follows he finds himself falling further and further behind as the crowds close in around him. Soon he is lost and turns in a slow circle trying to spot the man he has been pursuing. He jumps when a strong hand grips him by the arm and pulls him into an alley. He finds himself staring into the bright green eyes of the god of mischief. “Why are you pursuing me? Don’t you know I’m dangerous to you?”

“I’m not afraid,” Steve replies pulling his arm out of Loki’s grip.

“You will know fear and pain, Captain. And it will be my name on your lips that you wish to curse when the time comes.”

The sound of the blaring alarm drags Steve out of his dream. He stares up at the ceiling before getting to his feet. Each night those green eyes haunt his dreams. Each night since Stuttgart.

With a sigh he climbs out of bed and puts on his running clothes before heading out the door.

2 Days prior to Day 1

Steve wakes up covered in a sheen of sweat, the front of his boxers damp and sticky. He groans to himself, frustrated that it has happened again. These dreams, different from the others, don’t linger. He has only the faintest impression of cool skin pressed against his, hands moving across his body, lips brushing his own, a breathless moan whispering his name…. 
And so it begins.

Awake and Alive

Skillet

I'm at war with the world and they
Try to pull me into the dark
I struggle to find my faith
As I'm slippin' from your arms

It's getting harder to stay awake
And my strength is fading fast
You breathe into me at last

I'm awake I'm alive
Now I know what I believe inside
Now it's my time
I'll do what I want 'cause this is my life
Here, right here
Right now, right now
Stand my ground and never back down
I know what I believe inside
I'm awake and I'm alive

I'm at war with the world cause I
Ain't never gonna sell my soul
I've already made up my mind
No matter what I can't be bought or sold

When my faith is getting weak
And I feel like giving in
You breathe into me again

In the dark
I can feel you in my sleep
In your arms I feel you breathe into me
Forever hold this heart that I will give to you
Forever I will live for you
Day 1

The phone is ringing. Tony really doesn’t like it when it disturbs his work. The genius continues to work, letting the phone ring in the background as he turns up the music to drown it out. Finally it stops ringing, then immediately starts again. Tony ignores it again, instead focusing on the repulsor glove in his hand.

The music is turned off as his AI Jarvis cuts in, “Sir, Director Fury is on the line.”

“Don’t care, turn the music back on,” the billionaire states without looking up from his work.

“He is quite insistent that he speak to you now, sir.”

“Fine, but this better be good,” Tony grumbles. “Go for Stark!” he calls out to Director Fury with a smirk on his face.

“Loki turned up on the helicarrier,” Director Fury tells him, without preamble.

Immediately Tony sets down the glove with interest, "Loki as in destroyed a SHIELD base, killed a bunch of people, stole the tesseract, has a thing for weird hats, Loki? And about the tesseract? Do we know where it is?"

“He brought it with him, we have it secured.”

“What about Clint? What does Loki want?”

“Agent Barton was with him, he seems unharmed and is under observation. Loki only made one demand…” Fury says.

When he doesn't continue Tony prompts him "....and that is.....?"

“He wants to speak to Captain Rogers.”

“Spangles?”

“Yeah that's all he asked for and hasn't said a word since.”

Getting suspicious, Tony questions, “how long has he been there?”

“Long enough to know we aren’t getting anywhere.”

“You can't really be considering sending Capsicle in with Reindeer Games.”

“If we want to get any answers I don't see another option. I want all hands on deck, just in case. I’m calling him in now.” Director Fury disconnects the call as abruptly as he started it.

Tony grumbles to himself, certain this is a bad idea. What he doesn’t know is that although Loki did surrender peacefully, he has been getting more and more agitated over the past week while in Shield custody. Fury had hoped to gain some information before handing Rogers over, but he was finally forced to call in the Avengers when Loki escaped from his cell and turned up in his office, threatening to kill the next person to talk to him that wasn’t Captain Rogers. The fact that he had Nick pinned against the wall choking him with only one hand, convinced him that they were over their heads.
“Why me?” The man asks as he holds his arms out in front of him and looks down at his body. He is small, weak, frail and he knows it.

“The serum enhances what is already within. We don’t need a man with muscles,” Doctor Erskine tells him grasping at the smaller man’s bicep. “We need a man who has other strengths, in here,” he points to Steve’s head, “and in here,” he says moving his hand down to point at Steve’s heart. “Not a perfect soldier, but a good man.” Steve looks down at the finger touching his bare chest. The hand moves to caress his cheek and Steve looks back up into the bright green eyes of the god of mischief.

Steve jerks awake with a gasp. He swears he can still feel the touch of a cool hand on his face. The ringing of his cell phone brings his attention back to the present.

When the helicopter carrying Captain Rogers lands on the helicarrier he is greeted by Director Fury and Iron Man.

"What do we know?" Steve asks as he grabs his bag and steps onto the deck.

“Not much, he just showed up with Agent Barton, surrendered and asked to speak with you. Nothing else since then,” the director tells him, purposely leaving out the details of Loki’s visit to his office and the 3 holding cells that were destroyed before that.

“How is Clint?”

“Shaken up. He’s been with the psychologists most of the time. It may be a while before he is ready to get back into it, but he seems to no longer be under Loki’s control. We are keeping him under observation for now.”

Steve accepts this with a nod and makes a mental note to check in on Clint. “Loki didn’t put up a fight or try anything?”

“Nothing that we know of,” the director lies.

“So we don’t know what he’s playing at,” Steve concludes to himself with a shake of his head as Fury leads him below deck. He knows the Director is holding something back, but has to hope that whatever it is will not place him or others in danger. What he is not sure of is why his stomach is in knots at the thought of seeing Loki again.

His first stop is to the infirmary to check on Clint. The archer is quiet, but otherwise seems unharmed. Steve is hoping to get information from him, but it soon becomes clear that he hasn’t much information to offer.

“I told you, I don’t know what he is doing.”

Steve sighs then leans forward slightly, “I know you’re trying Clint, I just need to know if there is anything you remember, anything that might help.”

Clint looks up at the ceiling and tries to recall anything that seems useful, but there is very little. “I’m sorry. I know I should be able to remember. I was there, but I wasn’t in control. My thoughts weren’t my own, you know?”

Steve gives a small nod to encourage Clint to continue. After a moment, Clint looks back to his teammate then averts his eyes before going on.
“When he first, you know,” he says gesturing to his head, “he wanted to know about us, the team, strengths, weaknesses. But, I do know that after Germany, he had me tell him everything I know about you. I tried not to, I really did.”

Steve stands in the small room with Tony and Director Fury looking through the one way glass at the man that requested to see him. He observes the Asgardian for several minutes. The Norse god appears unremarkable as he sits in the chair staring straight ahead, without moving. He is wearing his Asgardian leathers, very much like when Steve encountered him while in Germany. When Steve opens the door and steps in the room the man turns his head to look at him as a smile spreads across his features. The smile doesn’t quite reach his green eyes.

"Captain Rogers! Please have a seat,” he says as he gestures to the chair across the table.

"Loki," the Captain says as he pulls the chair out and sits across from the dark haired man and takes in his lean frame, pale skin, and those intense green eyes that have haunted his dreams since Stuttgart.

“I understand you asked to speak with me?” Steve is on edge but trying to act nonchalant. Their first and last meeting ended with him straddling Loki after fighting him in Germany and nothing has been the same since then. The Captain cannot describe what he is feeling, but his instincts tell him that he and Loki are somehow connected and is determined to figure out how.

He glances up to the one way glass to make himself feel better, knowing Fury and Tony are watching. Loki follows his gaze and turns his body to also look at the glass. He can’t quite hide the smirk from his face. He turns back to Steve and waits until the blonde man returns his full attention to him, then he waits just a little longer.

"What do you want Loki?"

There is a small flicker of something across his face that Steve doesn't recognize, but isn't sure he likes.

"Right to the point Captain. I like that. I knew you were the right person to..... help me," Loki practically purrs.

This time Steve waits. He knows Loki is toying with him. But he doesn't know why. Yet.

"Simply put, Captain, I wish to change my fate." The look of confusion on the Captains face almost makes Loki smile again, but he refrains, knowing that won't serve his purpose. He has a goal in mind and has to play this carefully if he wishes it to succeed. He needs to keep his focus. He takes a moment to look the Captain over. He is wearing his uniform, but without the helm. His short blonde hair is slightly mussed and his jaw is tensed. The tight fitting uniform accentuates his muscles and the way he holds himself with confidence causes a little twinge in Loki’s stomach.

The soldier waits, thoughts racing, trying to read Loki’s body language unsuccessfully. This is not his area of expertise. Natasha would be more effective. He makes a mental note to have black widow conduct the next interrogation, if there is to be another.

Finally the Captain looks to Loki, "if SHIELD were to help you change your fate what would we get in return?"

"Oh you misunderstand Captain, I don't want SHIELD’S help. I only require your help. And as for what you will get in return?" He leans forward and lowers the pitch of his voice slightly, "you only
need tell me....", the god licks his lips and looks Steve up and down suggestively, then he pauses and looks at the Captain’s face gauging his reaction. Steve unconsciously leans forward mimicking Loki’s movement. “....What you require of me.”

Steve can feel himself starting to blush. As if on cue, several quick images, from his dreams, of the god in various states of undress flash in his head. He can feel the blush spreading across his cheeks and down his neck. Loki takes all this in and quirks an eyebrow as the corners of his mouth turn up ever so slightly.

"As I was saying Captain, you simply need to tell me what you want me to do."

Steve almost groans as he spreads his palms across the cold steel table trying to cool his suddenly too hot body.

Loki leans back in his seat, crosses his arms across his chest and tells the captain, "That's all for today. Thank you for your time."

Steve blinks at Loki's dismissal of him. The god doesn't spare him another glance making it clear he has no intention of continuing the conversation.

Loki is back in his cell feeling quite pleased with himself despite the conversation going off course from what he had originally planned. He knows he flustered the Captain with his suggestiveness, but he could not help himself. He had not planned on making him uncomfortable, but the sight of the blush spreading across the Captain’s features was just too hard to resist.

Barton had been quite helpful in supplying information on any possible threats to his plan. He thought he knew enough. Thought he had accounted for everything.

During the battle he began to have thoughts. Maybe..... He was fighting against the directive drilled into his head over countless hours of abuse. When the Captain’s shield came down against the side of his head silencing the insistent voice, he quickly decided to deviate from the plan. After that first meeting in Germany Loki was intrigued by the Captain, but his dream encounter with the fates convinced him to seek Rogers out.

Now he just has to stay focused on bringing the great Captain under his thrall and maybe together, they can change his fate. His dream made it clear it was not coincidence that it was the blow from the Captain’s shield that broke the hold on his mind. Loki tries hard to convince himself that this is the only reason why he is so focused on Captain America.

“What are you doing here so late sir?” Steve asks Director Fury as he strides past the surveillance room on his way to the gym. His meeting with Loki earlier has left him on edge and he knows the best way to combat that is to get some time at the gym to clear his head.

"I was just checking in on your new friend, Rogers," he says indicating the screen which shows Loki curled up into the fetal position on the bed in his cell. The director turns on the sound to the feed and immediately Steve can hear Loki mumbling something in his sleep. He leans forward to understand it better but can only catch pieces of words. The words come quicker and louder. Until the dark haired man is beginning to thrash around in the throes of a terrible nightmare. It is several long minutes before Loki calms again. Steve walks out feeling even more unsettled than before.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Short chapter with a little smut.

Chapter 3

Innocence
Halestorm

See it from the outside
Running toward the wall
Seeing from your blinds eye
But you don't know me at all
I've been here
Too many times before
And your tears don't mean a thing
I only come when you scream
I told you
Just don't follow me home
You're just to perfect for my hands to hold
If you choose to stay you'll throw it all away
And I just want to take your innocence
This is what you wanted
Did I make your dreams come true
Sitting in a corner
Wondering what you got into
You ache for this
There's no such thing as fate
Only yourself to blame
You never walked away
I told you
Just don't follow me home
You're just to perfect for my hands to hold
If you choose to stay you'll throw it all away
And I just want to take your innocence

Day 2

The woman known as black widow enters the room where Loki is once again seated at the interrogation table. She quirks an eyebrow at his disinterested demeanor then takes a seat across from him. Loki eyes her warily. Clint had warned him specifically about Natasha Romanov and he
really only wants to talk to Steve, who is currently standing with Tony and Director Fury behind the one way glass trying to suppress a smile as he watches the Asgardian.

Loki has decided to spend the time entertaining himself by casting illusions of miniaturized dragons and monsters about the room. An hour later, Natasha pushes her chair away from the table and leaves the room without speaking a single word. When Natasha leaves, he dispels the illusions and waits to be taken back to his cell. Director Fury just raises an eyebrow at Steve and leaves the room with Tony behind him. Steve stays behind staring into the room where Loki had been sitting. What does he want with me?

Day 3

Director Fury himself tries his luck with the trickster god. He finds himself staring across at a replica of himself.

“Loki, cut the crap, why are you here?”

Loki changes the illusion and now appears to be Thor.

“Is that what you want? For us to contact Thor?”

Loki changes the illusion again and now Fury is looking at Captain Rogers. Director Fury sighs and leaves the room without getting any new information. He knows, just as he always has, that the only option is to send Steve in again. He knows he is supposed to let this play out between Loki and Captain Rogers, but he can't help feeling like he is offering the Captain up as a sacrifice.

Day 4

"Captain Rogers! How nice to see you again. Have you given much thought to our previous conversation?"

"I'm only here to find out what you want Loki. Nothing more,” he states as he takes his seat across from the god. He takes note of the smile playing at the corner of the god's mouth, the glint in his eyes, the slight tilt of his head. Neither man speaks, they just sit assessing each other. Steve is trying desperately not to think about the dream he had the night before. Doesn’t want to think about gorgeous green eyes, inky black hair and long slender fingers that glide over skin eliciting pleasured groans as they move.

After several long minutes Loki finally clears his throat and begins, “I merely need to know what you want Captain and I shall endeavor to make it happen. In exchange I ask you to help me-"

"Change your fate, yes I know. We have been over this before,” the Captain interrupts. “I'm not doing anything until you explain yourself."

"Well then, it would appear we have a bit of a stalemate on our hands here, don't we Steve? May I call you Steve?"

The Captain feels heat blossom in his belly when Loki says his name. Without warning, Loki moves across the table and places a hand on either side of the Captains head. Behind the one way glass, Tony moves to the door to help his team mate, but Director Fury places a hand on his arm to hold him back as he watches the scene play out before him.
Loki is focused on the face in front of him. The strong features, the blue eyes that are even now turning down towards the table, trying not to fight the sensation of Loki combing through his thoughts. Steve does not know why he doesn't want to resist, why he doesn't fight or pull away from Loki’s touch. The feeling of cool hands on his face is all too familiar. Loki himself is surprised by the reaction and he probes deeper, looking through the soldiers memories.

He see’s images of Steve looking small and frail, a tiny home, many many fights that end badly for the young man, a dark haired man in an army uniform, a dark haired woman also in uniform. Then he sees the Captain as he is now, strong, powerful, images of war, death, sadness, loneliness, darkness and cold. He flips through these images as they flash by, making mental notes of what may be useful later.

Finally, he comes across a sight that intrigues him. He focuses his attention and he sees Steve, in a drab army uniform, before him is the lovely brunette from before in her own military garb. She leans in and places a chaste kiss on his lips. Just as the Captain begins to lean into the kiss and respond she pulls back and reaches down to run her hand across the front of his trousers. The blonde man closes his eyes as a small groan escapes his lips.

Loki feels a conflicting sense of excitement and resentment as he watches the woman undo the belt and then the button on the top of Steve’s pants. She begins to kiss him again as she unzips his pants and opens the fly. She pulls away from him again as she sinks to her knees and pulls out his swollen cock. "Peggy," the Captain breathes as her warm mouth engulfs him.

Just as Steve’s hand reaches for her hair, the body before him shifts slightly. The hair becomes shorter, the shoulders broader. “Bucky?” Steve questions but still grasps the hair and begins to move his hips. Steve closes his eyes and leans his head back, lost in the sensation. For some reason this causes a twinge of something foreign and ugly in the god’s stomach, but he continues to watch, realizing this is not one of the Captain’s memories.

Loki can tell that Steve is getting close. He keeps his eyes on the face of the Captain not wanting to look at the brown haired man pleasuring him. As he watches, the Captain opens his eyes and gazes down at the man before him. Loki keeps his eyes steadfast on the piercing blue ones. He can see a smile flit across the features of the soldier and then his head is thrown back. "That's it. Yessssss....Loki......" he breathes as he stops moving his hips and rides out his orgasm.

Loki's own eyes widen when he allows his gaze to travel down upon hearing his own name. He watches the image of himself rise up to stand in front of the blond man. The Captain pulls him forward forcefully and kisses him then shoves him away. The real Loki gasps and releases his grip on Steve’s head as he withdraws from his mind. The god practically falls back into his chair. The Captain glares at Loki, but says nothing. Then suddenly stands and storms out of the room. Loki looks down at the table and tries to steady his breathing.

In the hall outside Tony catches up with Steve. "What was that all about? What happened in there?" He asks.

"Nothing alright. Just... I don't want to talk about it,” Steve practically pleads.

"Fury is going to want to know. You'll have to tell him what went on in there,” Tony pushes.

Steve turns on him and presses him against the wall with his arm across Tony’s chest. "Just let it go okay?" he hisses then his features soften and he releases his team mate, "look I'm sorry, ok. Just.....please....let it go."

“Yeah, ok man, whatever you say,” Tony tells him raising his hands up in surrender. Steve turns and
continues down the hall towards the quarters he has been staying in. Only when the door is secured behind him does he allow a shaky breath as he practically throws himself onto the small bed. *Oh God, what just happened?.....*
Chapter 4

Little Lies

Fleetwood Mac

If I could turn the page
In time then I'd rearrange
Just a day or two
Close my, close my, close my eyes

But I couldn't find a way
So I'll settle for one day
To believe in you
Tell me, tell me, tell me lies

Tell me lies
Tell me sweet little lies
(Tell me lies, tell me, tell me lies)
Oh, no, no you can't disguise
(You can't disguise, no you can't disguise)
Tell me lies
Tell me sweet little lies

Although I'm not making plans
I hope that you understand
There's a reason why
Close your, close your, close your eyes

No more broken hearts
We're better off apart
Let's give it a try
Tell me, tell me, tell me lies

Day 5

“I can't quite figure out what happened between them,” Tony sighs, exasperated after watching the video of Loki and Steve’s encounter for the 15th time. “And Steve still won't talk about it?” He asks director fury.

“He hasn't said a word. All we could get during the debriefing is that Loki was in his head. He hasn't given us any more than that.”

“It's worrisome that Antlers was in his head…” Tony begins.

“I'm more worried that Steve won't tell us what happened,” Fury states as he walks out of the room heading for Steve’s quarters.
Fury knocks on the door, "Rogers?" When there is no answer he knocks harder. "Captain Rogers, open the door."

When there is still no answer he overrides the lock and goes in. The small room is empty. The bed is made and for all intents and purposes the room could be vacant, until something catches Director Fury’s eye, something sticking out from under the corner of the pillow on the bed. Fury lifts the pillow and pulls out a sketch pad. He thumbs through the pages seeing sketches of skylines, of a man that he knows from Steve’s file to be Sergeant James Barnes and of various Avengers. Towards the back he finds several drawings of a pair of intense green eyes. He turns the page and frowns as he takes in the unmistakable image of Loki on his knees, hands splayed out at his sides. Eyes cast down at the ground. With a sigh he closes the sketch book, tucks it under his arm and goes in search of the Captain.

In the gym Captain Rogers is working over his 5th heavy bag. He continues to pummel the bag until the chains snap and it too falls to the floor. As he bends to pick it up he hears someone clear their throat behind him. His heart sinks but he continues to pick up the bag and make room for another one, "is there something I can help you with Director?" He asks keeping his back to the man.

"Well, that depends."

"On what sir?" Steve prompts when Fury doesn't continue.

"On whether or not you have a good explanation for this?" Fury asks holding the book out for Steve to see when he turns.

"Where did you get that?" Steve asks, the accusation clear in his voice.

"That doesn't matter right now. I asked you to explain this," Fury says opening the book to show Steve the drawing of Loki.

Steve stops what he is doing, walks to the director and grabs the book out of his hand. "It's nothing."

Then he walks out of the gym.

Fury turns and watches the Captain walk away. “This isn't over soldier. We are going to talk about what happened in there,” he calls.

Steve stops but doesn't turn back. "Fine. Give me an hour and I will meet you in your office." Then he resumes walking back to his quarters. He knows he should tear up the pages from the sketch book but can't bring himself to do it. Frustrated he throws the book down and heads to the showers.

Once he is dressed again he starts to think about what he will tell the director. He can't tell him the truth. At least not all of it. He paces the small room for a few minutes then decides to go for a walk to clear his head. Before he knows it, he finds himself at the detention center. He hesitates before opening the door that leads to the individual cells. He knows that if he is caught there will be no denying what he was doing. Loki is currently the only prisoner on the helicarrier.

Inside his cell, Loki hears the click of the door opening and smiles to himself. He already knows who is behind the door before it is even opened. Quickly he lounges on the bed trying to look disinterested. The captain walks up to the glass and takes in the site of Loki reclined on his bed, shirt
unbuttoned, lean muscles on display. "Why Steve, I wasn't expecting to see you so soon. Have you given any thought to my proposal?"

Steve says nothing, just licks his lips and tries not to focus on the god’s body. "Steve? If you didn't come here to talk, why are you here?" Loki gets up and approaches the glass placing a hand on the surface. "Unfortunately talking is all I can do right now, seeing how I am locked up in this cage."

The look on Steve’s face almost makes Loki smile. Almost. But when Steve turns and leaves without a sound he feels a slight twinge of disappointment. He leans against the glass to watch the soldier walk away then returns to his place on the bed.

Steve turns up at director fury's office as promised and takes the offered seat. Fury doesn’t immediately look up, instead he continues to look at his computer screen. Then with a sigh he turns the screen so Steve can see the image of himself looking at Loki in his cell just 15 minutes prior.

"Let's cut the crap here Captain. What happened in there with Loki yesterday?"

Steve knows he has to come clean. He should tell him that he can’t get Loki out of his head. He knows he has no business continuing to talk to Loki, but he doesn’t want to give that up. "He said he wants me to help him change his fate."

"We know that part," Fury tells him getting impatient.

Steve starts again, "the thing is, we don't know what he means by that, not yet. Obviously he has some end game he is playing at. We just need to figure out what he wants."

"What he did, when he grabbed you? What was that?"

"He uh.... He was in my head. I think he was trying to decide if he could trust me or not. He obviously feels the need to trust me. He wouldn’t talk to anyone else. I think we can use this to our advantage. I can try to get close to him, earn his trust, find out what he is up to."

"And this little side trip to see him?" Fury asks indicating the image on the screen again.

"Just checking to see if he would react to me, talk to me again."

"I don't like this," Fury states.

"I know, but it's our best option."

Director Fury looks at the Captain, appraising the man before him. "Are you sure you can handle this? This type of assignment is more suited for Romanov."

"I can handle Loki. Just give me some time and I'll figure out what he is up to."

"Let's be clear, I am only agreeing to this because I don't have a better plan right now and we both know we won't be able to hold him if he decides to escape. Learn what you can, while you can."

"I'm on it sir," Steve says then exits the room with a barely suppressed sigh of relief. He came very close to lying to the Director, but left things vague enough to allow him to live with himself.

When Steve walks out, Fury remembers that he forgot to ask about the sketch book. He starts to call Steve back, but decides against it since it really won’t change his decision at this point. Steve is right, they need the information and as much as he hates to admit it, he doesn’t have any other
options right now. He reminds himself of his conversation with Queen Frigga to help ease his concerns.

Steve goes back to his room and pulls out the sketch pad again. He has to be more careful in the future. He turns to a fresh page and begins to draw Loki laying on his bed as he saw him today in his cell. As he draws, his mind wanders. He berates himself for misleading Director Fury, then convinces himself that he was truthful with him. He is going to find out what Loki wants and try to get close to the god. The fact that his stomach is fluttering with the anticipation of spending more time with the Asgardian is surely irrelevant.

Day 6

Steve is waiting in the interrogation room with 2 trays of food for breakfast when Loki is brought in. Immediately the god takes a seat across from the Captain. "Ah Steve, good to see you again so soon," he smirks. "Are we to dine together? How wonderfully quaint."

Steve pushes the tray across the table but says nothing. "Hmmm." Loki says looking over the tray of food which contains oatmeal, coffee and toast. "I usually prefer some type of fruit for breakfast, meat? Maybe milk?"

"Just eat it," Steve grumbles as he begins to eat his own oatmeal. The blonde is exhausted and his mood is foul after having woken up to another dream of the god and yet another mess in his boxers. The two men eat in silence for several minutes.

"I suppose I should thank you."

"For what?" Steve asks perplexed.

"For this," Loki responds with a wave of his hand. "Getting out of that cell, even just to sit in this room and for breakfast."

"You're welcome," Steve tells him trying to ignore the little twist of pleasure in his belly.

"I said I should thank you. Doesn't mean I will," Loki adds with a sly smile.

"Fine, have it your way," Steve says as he stands and takes both trays out of the room closing the door behind him.

Loki watches him walk out trying not to show the disappointment he feels. He may have to change tactics with the Captain.

"What was that?" Fury asks when Steve closes the door to the interrogation room.

"That was breakfast," he replies simply. "I'm going to the gym," he adds and then walks out, trying to control his irritation.

Day 7

Loki is pacing his cell. No one has come to take him to the interrogation room yet. In fact, no one has come by at all so far today. He sits on the chair next to his bed and stares at the wall beyond the glass. After an hour Loki disappears from his cell. He reappears twenty minutes later with several
books and sits back in the chair with one in his hand. He tries to focus on the words on the page and to not let his thoughts dwell on the Captain. He really tries.

The Captain is sitting in his room trying not to think about the god in the detention area. He knows he shouldn’t be so irritated by Loki’s words at their last meeting, but he can’t help himself. If he were being honest with himself he would admit that he was upset that Loki didn’t act pleased that Steve brought him breakfast. If he were being honest, he would admit that he wants the god to like him. But he is not being honest and so he tells himself that he is irritated because Loki was rude. He looks down at the sketch book in front of him and realizes he has drawn Loki sitting in the interrogation room. His lips are slightly parted with a small smile and his eyes sparkle with untold mischief. With a sigh, Steve slams the book shut and heads down to the gym to work off some of his frustration. Maybe it will be enough to exhaust him into a dreamless sleep.

Day 8

Clint Barton is angry. He is currently sitting in his quarters waiting for his next evaluation. Director Fury has mandated that he cannot return to active duty until he passes a series of psych evaluations, and this makes Clint angry. The director doubts his ability to think clearly, doubts his ability to focus on a mission. All because of what Loki did to him. Now that the god is out of his head, he wants to get back to his routine, forget what it felt like to be trapped inside his own head, unable to control his actions. Wants to forget the nightmares that plagued him at night, continue to plague him. He knows they are not his own. He knows they are the same ones that Loki has suffered through for months. Even so, he cannot feel sympathy for the man, not after what he did to Clint. Not ever.

Loki is getting agitated. He has been sitting in his cell and the only contact he has had since breakfast with Captain America the previous day, is with Agent Romanov who comes and shoves his food through the slot in the door. He fully expected the Captain to come back to him the next day. He is loathe to admit it, but Steve has surprised him by not coming back yet.

He paces the floor in the nondescript gray cell thinking about his next move. Surely his childish behavior hasn’t driven the Captain away? He must have been called away. Yes, that’s it. The good Captain was called away on a mission and that is why he hasn’t returned. He will be back. With this rationalization Loki settles back onto the bed and stares at the ceiling feeling much better about his situation, right up until his treacherous mind pulls him back into thinking about the blonde man with those blue soulful eyes.

Captain Rogers is sitting across from Nick Fury in his office. “You haven’t been back to talk to Loki, care to let me know what your angle is?”

The Captain stares pointedly at Director Fury and mentally reviews what he has planned to say. The truth is that Loki has gotten under his skin. He continues to dream about him at night, thinks about him while awake. When he left after their last encounter, he fully intended to come back the next day, but he is not sure he is quite ready to face the man that has been traipsing around in his dreams.

Bad dreams he is used to. Since waking up from the ice he has regular nightmares, but this is something else. He dreams of doing unspeakable things to the Norse god and isn’t ready to face the
man again for fear that he will somehow know. To Fury he says, “I am letting him stew for a few days. Let him know he is not in control of this situation. I am.” He mentally laughs at that and resists nervously running a hand through his hair, knowing he is starting to feel out of control when it comes to Loki.

Day 9

When Steve enters the interrogation room he finds Loki sitting at the table looking like a petulant child. “Good morning Loki,” he says in greeting.

“No breakfast for me today?”

“We both know your breakfast was brought to you this morning,” Steve chides him.

“Well I didn’t eat it. I have been so worried about you. Figured you must have been injured since you didn’t come back,” Loki says, his voice dripping in fake sincerity.

“I didn’t know you cared. But I just decided to take a couple of days off,” Steve responds with his own false cheerfulness.

Loki narrows his eyes at the captain but says nothing.

“I’m here now, are you ready to talk?” Steve asks.

Loki waves his hand dismissively, “very well. What would you have me tell you?”

Steve sits up, suddenly taking a keen interest in the conversation, but unprepared as to how to answer. “Uh….. Tell me about Thor.”

Loki scowls at the Captain, “I’m sitting here offering my vast knowledge and you choose to ask about that bore?”

“Ok, then what do you want to talk about?”

“We could delve deep into the psyche of Captain America. What motivates him. What deep dark secrets is he hiding? Hmmm…. Yes I think that would be quite a discussion,” the god practically leers at him.

Steve can feel the blush spreading up his neck, “We aren’t here to talk about me,” he says quickly. When Loki doesn’t continue Steve prompts him. “Ok. Can you tell me about your attack on Stuttgart?”

“Very well,” Loki drawls with a bored wave of his hand which causes Steve to lean forward excitedly.

“Oh so anxious. Have patience Steve. You don’t want to come across as over eager. It’s not becoming,” Loki teases at his reaction.

Steve sits back in his chair and makes a conscious effort to relax his shoulders. Loki smiles in response.

“I was looking for a scientist.” Loki pauses and stares pointedly at the Captain.

“The one you blinded?”
“Ah yes, I did do that,” Loki tells him while putting a look on his face that he hoped conveyed remorse.

Steve isn’t fooled, “his career is ruined. He was one of the most celebrated scientists in his field.”

“If you were to bring him here, I could be convinced to heal him,” Loki says sounding bored.

“You can do that?” Steve asks excitedly. “How does that work?”

Loki smiles to himself. He knows Steve won’t dare miss any meetings with him now. He just needs to give him a little information each day to keep him coming back.

Back in his cell Loki is laying on his bed thinking over what he should tell Steve when they next meet. He needs the Captain to feel protective of him. He has to play on the Captain’s sense of justice and fairness. His mind wanders onto the images he pulled from Steve’s mind and his body gives an unconscious shiver. It has been centuries since he has last taken a lover. With good reason, but the Captain is a fine specimen. Tall, muscular. Those blue eyes. Loki wills himself to think upon other things. Anything other than the chiseled features, the crows feet at the corner of those incredible eyes from laughing or the way those same eyes draw together when the man frowns in concentration. Loki wants to think of anything other than Steve, but he is afraid that he cannot. The god is very afraid, this simply cannot happen, but his devious mind has a will all its own.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Another short chapter

Chapter 5

Collide

Howie Day

The dawn is breaking
A light shining through
You're barely waking
And I'm tangled up in you

I'm open, you're closed
Where I follow, you'll go
I worry I won't see your face
Light up again

Even the best fall down sometimes
Even the wrong words seem to rhyme
Out of the doubt that fills my mind
I somehow find
You and I collide

I'm quiet you know
You make a first impression
I've found I'm scared to know I'm always on your mind

Even the best fall down sometimes
Even the stars refuse to shine
Out of the back you fall in time
I somehow find
You and I collide

Day 10

“Good morning Steve!” Loki greets cheerfully as the Captain walks in the interrogation room.

Steve is taken somewhat by surprise by the gods bright smile and he returns it with one of his own.
“Good morning to you Loki, what has you in such a good mood today?”
“Why Steve, is it really so shocking that I should be in good spirits? Am I that bad?” Loki pouts, while trying to hide a smirk.

“No! No, I just meant….” Steve sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose.

Loki lets out a small laugh and leans back in his chair, “Relax Steve. What do you wish to talk about today?”

“What can you tell me about that blue cube? The tesseract? I’ve seen it before. It was quite dangerous.”

“Oh, yes. It is extremely dangerous. It has the power to open portals, but only for a short time, which is why I needed the scientist to get iridium. To stabilize it.”

“You used it to get here. To Earth,” this is not a question.

“Very clever Steve. It has other uses as well. The tesseract is an ancient power capable of great destruction.”

“In the war, Hydra was using it to make weapons. It was lost before I went into the ice. I don’t know how Shield came to have it. How did you know where to find it?”

Loki stands from his chair and begins to walk around the small room. “Captain, I believe you will find that Shield has a great many secrets. As for how I found it? It calls out to be used. All of the stones do in one way or another. Ultimately I was to retrieve it.”

Loki has come to a stop behind Steve’s chair so he has to turn and crane his neck to speak to the god. “Retrieve it for who?”

Loki’s voice is small and wavers ever so slightly when he responds, “there are many who would possess the tesseract.” He walks to the door of the room and knocks quickly on it. “I think that’s enough for today.”

Steve looks at him, bewildered by the change in demeanor, but he nods to the mirrored window and the Black Widow opens the door to take Loki back to his cell.

Day 11

“Is the scepter your weapon? Like Mjolnir is Thor’s?” Steve asks as soon as he sits down.

Loki frowns slightly before he answers, “it is a weapon, but it does not belong to me.”

“Then how did you get it?”

“I was to use it to take over Midgard,” Loki tells him.

Steve can tell that Loki is being evasive and tries to hide his reaction, but finally, Loki is close to telling him about his plans to take over earth and so he presses on. "What does it do?"

“It allows the wielder to control another. It also has an energy that can be directed and used for destructive purposes.”

Steve has seen first hand what the scepter can do. It scared him because it reminded him of the weapons built by hydra. "How does it work? The mind control."
Loki thinks for a moment before answering, "there are 3 ways to control another. The first way is by using something to alter the brain. It can be permanent or temporary, depending on what you do. For instance, you can erase memories and replace them with ones of your choosing. You can place suggestions. You can also block certain sections of the brain that control free will. Again, permanently or temporarily, but when you do this, you run the risk of the subject losing the ability to think for themselves and becoming a mere vessel. You must have a delicate touch to allow the subject just enough autonomy to be useful.” Loki sounds almost proud when he says this.

“That's what you did to agent Barton and the others? You suppressed something? They seem okay now.”

“Yes, they should have no lasting effects.” Loki pauses as he considers Agent Barton. He had to be more forceful with the scepter due to Clint’s strong will.

“The most subtle and hardest way is through manipulation. Get someone to feel like the choices they make are their own. It takes a lot of skill and finesse.” Loki does not add that he is highly skilled in this area and has in fact been doing it since he first stepped foot on the helicarrier.

When Loki doesn't continue Steve prompts him, "how else?"

"What?” Loki asks.

"How else can you control someone? You said there were 3 ways.”

"That I did. The final way is through torture." A look comes over Loki's face as he says this. His voice a little too flippant, but his body is rigid and tense. Steve can see the look of shame and tries to dismiss it. He doesn’t want to think about what that means and so he changes the subject.

Day 12

Steve walks in carrying a flat box. Loki enters the room and takes his seat eyeing it. “Try this, I think you might like it,” the Captain tells Loki as he opens the pizza box and pushes it towards the god.

Loki raises an eyebrow, but does not make a move. Steve shrugs and pulls the box back across the table and takes a slice out. He smiles at the god as he takes a bite. He gets halfway through it when Loki reaches over and takes a piece. He puts it to his mouth and wrinkles his nose in faked displeasure. Steve waits for his reaction, but Loki’s face remains expressionless, “it’s not terrible, I suppose,” he drawls. Steve smirks as he continues to eat.

“Are there other artifacts like the scepter and the tesseract?” he asks when they have finished off the entire pizza.

“There are many such items in Odin’s weapons vault.”

“Did the tesseract and the scepter come from there?”

“The tesseract was there long ago,” Loki responds leaning back in his chair.

Steve notices that once again Loki is avoiding talking about the scepter’s origins. “So what else is in there?”

“There is an eternal flame that cannot be extinguished, the infinity gauntlet, the casket of ancient
winters and other rare items,” Loki tells Steve.

“What does that casket thing do?”

Loki frowns slightly thinking about how he used the casket and the secret that revealed about his parentage. “It is a weapon that can be used to bring about an ice age.”

“Has it ever been used?”

Loki frowns again, “yes, it has, both here on Midgard long ago and more recently on Asgard.”

“What happened?” Steve asks excitedly.

“You have heard of the ice age, have you not? It is part of your Midgardian school studies isn’t it?”


Loki turns to the side, a pained expression on his face. When he turns back to Steve he looks resigned. He is the one who brought up the casket, of course Steve would be curious. “I used it to try and destroy the Jotunhiem.” Please don’t ask, please don’t ask he silently pleads.

But of course Steve does, “What is the Jotunhiem?”

“The Jotun are frost giants. Enemies of Asgard.”

“And that’s why you were trying to destroy them? To protect Asgard?” Steve asks, trying to understand.

“My motives were not quite so altruistic as you would like to believe.” Loki tells Steve, then to change the subject he asks, “what is your shield made of? It seems most remarkable, far stronger than I would have expected.”

Steve smiles as he remembers the first time he saw the shield. Soon Loki is smiling too as Steve recounts Peggy shooting at him.
Chapter 6

Trust Nobody
The D4

Nothing ever came to me easy
Nothing ever came to me free
I've been looking out for something to please me
Well I've been working everyday of the week
(Hey you!) Nothing ever came to me easy
(Hey you!) Nothing ever came to me free
(Hey you!) I get every little thing that I wanted
(Hey you!) I get whatever I need
Don't put your trust in nobody
You can't trust nobody but yourself
(No no no)
Everybody's gonna keep on pushing
Cause everybody's got something to hide
But you know when push comes to shoving
Your brothers gonna leave you behind
Keep on confusing
The line between fiction and fact
They got smiles they don't mind using
While their sharpening the knife for your back

Day 13

"Sir, Thor has arrived at Stark Tower via the bifrost. He is in route to you. Eta five minutes."

Tony acknowledges the AI and turns to Nick Fury. He is tired of reviewing the latest recordings of Loki anyway. It has been 3 weeks since the god appeared on the helicarrier, 2 weeks since he started meeting with Steve, and they are still no closer to figuring out exactly why he surrendered and up until now, they haven’t told Asgard of Loki’s where abouts. He has been giving Steve little pieces of information, but it is obvious that Loki is dragging this out.

"I'll go with you," Nick tells him, making it clear that Tony is to follow his lead. They head up to the deck together where they hear the crack of thunder signaling Thor’s arrival just as the elevator doors are opening.

When Thor sees them approach he greets them warmly. "Tony, Director Fury, friends it has been too
long. My duties keep me away far too often." In his hands he is carrying a satchel.

"What brings you here now?" Nick asks getting right down to business.

Thor begins to speak as a fighter jet starts to taxi past them. He looks to the elevator and gestures in that direction indicating he would like to talk somewhere else. Once inside the elevator Thor looks to both men, "I would like to talk about my brother."

"Oh? What about good 'ole bag 'o cats?" Tony asks trying to sound nonchalant but behind the bigger man’s back he is frantically gesturing and mouthing to Nick, “Does he know?”

Thor ignores Tony’s insult, "we should talk in private." Tony looks to the Director with his eyes wide.

Nick who has been quiet up until now, finally speaks up, "have Captain Rogers meet us in my office," he says touching the com unit in his ear, connecting him to Agent Hill.

When the elevator arrives at the proper floor, Fury leads the way to his office and once inside, everyone takes a seat until Steve arrives.

The Captain pokes his head in the office, "you wanted to see me?" He falls silent when he sees Thor sitting across from the director and tries to hide the surprise on his face. His stomach clenches in sudden fear at what Thor’s visit could mean.

"Come in Captain," the director begins, "Thor wanted to discuss Loki." He looks at Steve pointedly, hoping the soldier understands not to say anything.

"Uh, yeah, okay," the blonde responds and takes a seat next to Tony hoping he won't have to make eye contact with Thor.

"So..." Nick prompts looking to the god of thunder.

“Heimdall saw Loki on Midgard.”

“And does he see him now?” Steve asks, his voice only slightly betraying his nervousness.

“Nay, he only saw him briefly in Germany. We don’t know what he was doing. Heimdall was only able to see him for a short time. He has been looking for him ever since.” Thor tells the men. “I don’t know what my brother is planning, but he never does anything that does not serve his purposes.”

Steve looks to Thor and finally speaks up, “So Asgard has no leads at all?”

Even the Captain can see how uneasy Thor is answering this question. “No, Asgard has no leads as to where Loki currently is.” What he doesn’t say is that they may not know where Loki currently is, but they do have something else.

Steve is troubled by the fact that they are not telling Thor that Loki is on the helicarrier, but he also doesn’t want to hand him over to Asgard. So he tries to tell himself that they aren’t really lying to Thor, just leaving out information. Director Fury can see the turmoil on Steve’s face and knows he needs to end the meeting quickly.

"Is there anything else?" Nick asks Thor.

"I would ask that you keep a watch out for Loki. I have brought some items that will prove helpful
should you encounter him." He reaches for the satchel that has been sitting at his feet. When he opens the bag he pulls out a set of wrist binders and something else that Steve cannot identify, but does not like the looks of. “These will bind his magic,” he states holding up the binders, “and this will silence him,” he says as he moves the other item up to his mouth to show how it is to be attached.

“I see, thank you for the information and for these," Fury tells him as he stands to indicate that the meeting is over. "Captain, a word please?"

Tony takes that as his cue to lead Thor back to the deck and so he turns to his friend and says, "shall we?"

Thor smiles at Tony as he exits the office, "tell me, how is Lady Pepper?"

Once the door is closed behind them, Nick turns to the Captain. "He can't know. Not yet."

"Oh, I know that. Doesn't mean I have to like it. He will find out sooner or later and then what? How will we explain that we have had Loki all this time?"

"Leave that to me. Obviously there is something else going on, why else would it take Asgard this long to tell us they could see him in Stuttgart?"

Clint Barton is angry. He heads directly down to the detention area where Loki is being held. When he stands in front of the cell he no longer knows what he wants to say. Part of him wants to rage and scream at the man, wants to open the cell and beat him to a bloody pulp, but when he see’s Loki laying on his bed, curled in on himself, looking so lost and vulnerable, he cannot bring himself to do anything other than stare. It is several long minutes before Loki is finally aware of his presence. He sits up and narrows his eyes at Clint, “Agent Barton. What brings you down here?”

When Clint says nothing, Loki continues, “am I being handed over to Asgard?”

Still Clint does not answer. He is no longer there. He is facing Loki, but does not see him. He is lost within himself. Lost in one of the more familiar nightmares. He is being tortured, burned and healed and burned and healed, over and over. His burned skin flayed from his body leaving him raw, only to start again when he has healed. Even when he is left to heal, he is given no respite. The psychological torture is the worst. Being told over and over in great detail what a monster he is, he will bring about the deaths of all he loves, but not before they all turn against him. Then the visions start. Thor laying prone with a sword driven through his chest, his right arm has been torn off just above the elbow, one eye is ruined, a gory hole left instead. His voice is hoarse as he curses Loki for having ever been born. The visions of Queen Frigga are worse. Her tears break his heart, the disappointment and disgust on her face break his spirit.

Clint has seen all of this and so much more. When Loki controlled his mind all of these horrible visions invaded Clint’s head. He was helpless to stop it and even though it has lessened with Loki’s hold on him released, the dreams still haunt him. Sensing his distress, Loki approaches the glass separating him from Clint.

“Agent Barton?” Loki knows where Agent Barton is. He has been there many times himself. “Agent Barton? I can help you.”

Clint shakes his head as if to clear it and glares at the god before him. “I can help you. Take some of it away. You need not suffer,” Loki tries again.
Without a word Clint turns and storms out of the detention area. Clint Barton is angry.

When Loki is brought in, Steve is already sitting at the table. He looks upset, which raises Loki’s curiosity, but also makes him worry.

"What did the big oaf want?” he asks nonchalantly as he takes a seat opposite Steve.

For his part, Steve tries to hide his surprise that Loki knows about Thor’s visit, but the trickster is quite good at reading people and the Captain does not hide his feelings well.

"The thunder, it gives it away. He really should learn a more subtle way to arrive and depart,” the dark haired man smirks.

“I think Thor may know something. Would Asgard have any reason to suspect you are here?”

“They don’t know where I am. I have been hiding my presence.”

Steve can’t explain why he feels a sense of relief at this, but then another thought occurs to him, “what about Clint. Can Heimdall see him?”

“I assume that since Thor has not tried to drag me back to Asgard that you have not told him that I am here. I didn’t know you had it in you to be deceitful Steve. But not to worry, I have Agent Barton shielded as well. So long as I have my magic, we will remain hidden.”

Day 14

The Captain is already sitting in the interrogation room when The Black Widow leads Loki in. The god takes his customary seat and flashes a toothy smile to The Widow as she turns to leave.

“If you can hide your location from Heimdall, like you are now, then why was he able to see you in Germany?” Steve asks without greeting. This question has been on his mind since Thor’s visit.

Loki narrows his eyes at Steve, considering his answer. He knew Heimdall would see him when he arrived in Stuttgart. The original plan meant for Heimdall to alert Thor and send him to assist in Loki’s capture. “Very insightful Steve,” Loki purrs leaning forward.

The tone of his voice makes Steve’s stomach clench in a pleasant way, but also irritates him. He tries to ignore it and looks across the table, “Just answer the question, Loki.”

“Plans change,” is all the Asgardian responds.

“Plans Change? That’s it? You come to Earth, destroy a Shield facility, take several hostages through mind control, blind a German scientist and cause general chaos all while being able to be tracked? People died Loki! Good people! Then you turn up here asking for me and suddenly you’re hiding? And all you can say is plans change?” Steve crosses his arms in front of his chest and leans back in his seat.

“And does it bother you that I am the cause of all this? That people died by my actions?” Loki growls.

“Of course it bothers me!” Steve shouts. “Of course it does,” he repeats quieter.

They sit across from each other in silence for the next half hour. Finally Steve gets up to leave, “I don’t know what you’re playing at, but I don’t like games,” he growls as he walks out.
This has to stop. I am here to do a job. That’s all. Steve repeats this over and over in his head, just as he has all morning. So far he hasn’t been able to convince himself that it is true.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

A little deeper into Loki's headspace.

Chapter 7

Save Me

Martin Kesici

I can not remember
Don't know, where I come from
Can't wait, until I die
Darkness, all around me.
Leave me, save me from myself.
People, all around me
How can, I find my way
Back if, I fall in down
Gore, Cold. Is what I feel.
Leave me, save me from myself.
How can I ignore,
The shadows on my soul
Secrets everywhere,
I'm losing self control
Let the future turn to past,
Timeless Demons in My Mind.
Not remember... where I come from...
Until I die... all around me...

Day 15

The Black Widow takes Loki’s lunch tray and shoves it through the slot into his cell. She can see the tray from breakfast still untouched. Loki is sitting in the chair next to the bed. His gaze is directed downward and he doesn’t acknowledge her presence in any way. She glances around the room and then leaves Loki to himself. She has not been told to bring him to the interrogation room today and when she tried to ask Steve he only glared at her and went back to punching the heavy bag in front of him. The fact that he sought her out later to apologize only slightly eases her mind.

She can tell that Steve is under a lot of strain meeting with Loki everyday. And not for the obvious reasons. She watches their daily interactions, studying reactions and analyzing words. She is a little concerned and hopes she is wrong about what she sees between the 2 men, but she has to admit,
Loki has been relatively behaved since he started meeting with Steve.

Day 16

"Loki! Loki wake up!" Natasha yells as she slams her fist against the glass barrier to his cell. The god is thrashing on his bed, legs tangled in his blankets, hair wet with sweat.

"Loki!" she tries again before unlocking the door and moving to his side. When she touches his arm she can feel his skin is burning up and is covered in a thin sheen of perspiration. She grips him arm tighter and shakes him. Loki jerks up from the bed with a gasp. He looks confused and vulnerable, just for a moment. Then his eyes settle on the Black Widow kneeling beside the bed.

"It is unwise to touch me, Widow."

"I figured I would chance it. Care to tell me what the dream was about?" she asks as she gracefully stands.

Loki just looks at her sullenly and does not reply.

She stifles a sigh, glances around the room and then turns back to him, "you came to us Loki."

"I am aware of how I came to be in this cage!" he snaps.

Romanov has no visible reaction to the outburst, instead she turns towards the door and exits the cell.

Loki gets up from the bed and pours himself some water before taking a seat in the chair. He tries to pretend not to notice how his hand is shaking when he lifts the glass to his lips.

It is late in the afternoon when he is led to the interrogation room. Captain Rogers is sitting in his usual place when Loki sits opposite him.

"Did you think about what you want to talk about today?" the blonde asks.

Loki doesn't answer immediately. He sits studying his fingernails for a few long minutes until Steve sighs and pushes his chair back from the table.

"Wait!"Loki says just a little too loudly causing Steve to stare at him and quirk one eyebrow. "Wait. I um......." Loki pauses again, not sure what he wants to say. Instead of getting angry, Steve surprises Loki by sitting back down, this time his posture is more relaxed. He says nothing to the Norse god, just waits patiently.

"On Asgard magic is considered a feminine skill. They value their men as mighty warriors, skilled swordsmen, thuggish brutes. Very little thought is spared for planning, strategy and finesse. Great oafs, the lot of them. Very much like Thor."

Steve works to keep his expression blank. He doesn’t want to interrupt Loki for fear that he will stop talking.

An hour later, Loki looks up at Steve who hasn't said much of anything to this point. Loki blinks his eyes several times and looks about the room. "It would seem I have run off at the mouth Steve. I apologize."
"No, don't apologize. I like hearing your stories. Maybe tomorrow you can tell me more about the bifrost?" he asks as he stands to indicate that their time is over for the day.

Loki also stands, "perhaps Steve, perhaps."

Steve heads straight to his room and pulls out his sketch pad. He begins to draw one of the scenes Loki described. A battle with Thor and several of his warrior friends. Loki in the background weaving a protection spell to keep them safe as he also conjures images of a supporting army to encourage the surrender of the opposing combatants. He keeps all the figures simple except for Loki, where he spends a lot of time perfecting his armor and the look of determination on his face. When he is satisfied, he flips the page and begins to draw a new scene with Thor standing before a large throne. His expression is proud and arrogant while Loki stands slightly behind and to his right. When he is done, he gazes at the slight downturn of Loki's mouth, the sadness in his bright green eyes.

He sets the sketch down an hour later and heads to the mess hall. As he begins to eat, Natasha slides into the seat across from him. She has a tray of food with her that she sets down. Steve is on edge before she even begins to speak.

“I've been reviewing your meetings with Loki,” she begins.

Steve says nothing as he continues to eat.

“He seems to like you,” she continues.

Steve shrugs a shoulder, wary of where the conversation is going. “The way he talks to you. The way he looks at you. Even when you two are at odds…..”

“What are you getting at?”

“Nothing, just making conversation. I don’t get a lot of time to just sit and talk to you.”

Steve puts his fork down on his plate and sits back in his seat, folding his arms across his chest. “Since when do we ever sit and talk?”

“Fair enough,” she responds. “I just want to make sure you know what you’re doing Steve.”

Steve consciously tries to relax his body, “I’m fine Natasha, really.”

“I’m not so sure,” she tells him leaning in slightly. Steve frowns at her as she continues. “He fluctuates between making puppy eyes while flirting shamelessly or being a complete ass and you’re either oblivious to it or you’re enjoying it.” She pauses to that that sink in, then gets up to leave, picking up her untouched tray of food. “Either way makes me uncomfortable.”

Day 17

Steve narrows his eyes as Loki walks in and takes his seat. Something seems wrong with the man, but he can’t quite place his finger on it. Loki pretends not to notice the frown on Steve’s face.

“You wish to know more of the bifrost?” he begins.

“Yes! What does it feel like when you use it? Can you see anything? Is it instant or does it take time
to travel from place to place?” Steve asks excitedly, forgetting his concerns.

Loki has to hold back a laugh at Steve’s excitement. “Interesting that you do not ask how it works.”

Steve blushed slightly, “oh, well, I guess I figured that would just go over my head any way. There are plenty of smart people working on that. I just wanted to know what it was like.”

“Don’t sell yourself short Steve. You are one of the smartest people on this flying contraption. Have no doubt in that.”

The blush on Steve’s face darkens and begins to spread down his neck. “No, not really. Tony and Bruce, they are geniuses. I can’t understand most of what they talk about.”

“Steve, there are different types of genius. Don’t forget that.”

“Yeah, I know, but I wouldn’t put myself on their level.”

“No, neither would I. You are so much more than they could ever hope to be,” Loki tells him, then adds quietly, “why do you think I came to you?”

The silence stretches out between them for a few more moments. “So, uh, the Bifrost…” Steve prompts.

Later that night Loki’s body is engulfed in a green glow. The god is laying on his bed, on top of the blankets. His body is rigid, but his face is constricted into a grimace. He lets out a single scream as a blast of energy exits his body, instantly vaporizing everything within the room other than the bed Loki is currently laying on.

He jerks awake and looks around in horror, taking in the damage, the remnants of his nightmare fading away until all he is left with is a vague impression of darkness and pain. Loki takes a deep breath and concentrates as he conjures an illusion to make his cell look undamaged.

Day 18

Loki is already seated at the table when Steve walks in the room dressed in his Captain America uniform. “Ah, there you are Steve,” Loki beams as he looks him up and down.

Steve can feel himself blushing under the god’s gaze as he recalls his conversation with Natasha 2 days before. “Don’t look at me like that,” he tells Loki.

Loki flicks his eyes up to Steve’s face as a small smile turns up the corners of his mouth. “Look at you like what?” He purrs as he goes back to admiring the Captain’s body.

“Like that, right there!”

Loki chuckles, “I’m just admiring the utility of your uniform. It appears to be well made, fits just right…” He licks his lips and looks back to Steve’s face again.

“Loki, stop, ok?” Steve practically pleads.

With a dramatic sigh Loki says, “You come in here dressed like that and expect me not to react?” Steve says nothing in response, only continues to look at Loki. “Ok, very well,” he says with a wave
of his hand, “at least sit down then, so I can’t see so much of you.”

Steve gives Loki an exasperated look, but takes his seat.

“On Asgard most warriors wear quite a bit of armor. We have the best craftsman in the realms, but the armor still tends to limit one’s ability to move. Even my own leathers would be severely limiting if I did not have magic to assist me.”

When Steve leaves, he has learned quite a bit about Asgardian armor and has elicited a promise from Loki to allow Steve to try out his leathers at another time. He goes back to his room and proceeds to draw the raven haired man in his own Captain America uniform. The finished image causes Steve’s stomach to clench as heat pools in his groin.

Once again Loki is dreaming.

He clings onto the bladed end of the Chitauri scepter, blood running down his arms. Steve holds the other end as Loki hangs precariously above the great abyss. “I did it for you, Steve.”

“No, Loki.” The Captain growls as he releases the scepter and Loki falls.

He wakes up with a gasp. He stares at the ceiling trying to slow down his breathing, but he will sleep no more this night.

Day 19

Loki is sitting in his room. He is exhausted, but doesn’t want to sleep, afraid of what dreams will haunt him. When he is taken to the interrogation room he sits in the chair with his head in his hands. Steve breezes in and takes a seat just as Loki takes a breath and attempts to hide how tired he is.

“What can you tell me about Mjolnir?” Steve asks, oblivious to Loki’s condition.

“It is said that only one who is deemed worthy can lift Mjolnir,” Loki begins.

“Can you lift it?” Steve interrupts.

“As I said, only those that are worthy.”

“Can you lift it?” Steve interrupts.

“So Thor is worthy, but you are not?” Steve questions. “Who decides?”

Loki chuckles despite his exhaustion. Steve’s enthusiasm is an endless source of amusement for Loki. He answers as many of Steve’s questions as he can until there is a tap on the door. Steve gets up and opens the door just enough to whisper to the person on the other side. He sits back in his chair. His enthusiasm now replaced with a wary apprehension.

“What happened to your cell?”

The god feels a knot in his stomach. His illusion must have slipped at some point. “I had a slight lapse in control. Nothing to be concerned with.”
Steve looks unconvinced as he frowns at the god. “A lapse in control? Are you okay?”

“I assure you Steve, your concern is unwarranted. I am fine.”

“Would you tell me if you weren’t?” Steve questions.

“Of course not,” Loki answers. “Are we done for today?” He wants to end this conversation quickly before the Captain can ask any more questions.

The look of concern on Steve’s face is replaced by one of disappointment, “uh, sure. Natasha said your cell hasn’t been fixed yet, but she can take you back.” He looks to the mirrored glass as he says this. The Black Widow opens the door and holds it for Loki to follow her out.

Day 20

Loki is led into the interrogation room. Steve can see that something is very wrong as soon as he sees the man. There are dark circles under his bloodshot eyes. Normally pale, his coloring is more gray this morning. He practically stumbles forward and Steve jumps up to guide him into a chair. “Are you ok?” Steve asks anxiously.

Loki only slightly lifts his head, but he doesn’t focus on Steve. “Loki, hey what’s going on?” Still no answer from the god. Steve is getting worried. “Are you sick?”

After what seems like a lifetime, Loki finally focuses on Steve, “I just want to make it stop,” he mumbles.

Steve is around the table in an instant, kneeling before Loki. “Make what stop? Loki, look at me.”

The god slowly turns to look at Steve crouched before him. “When I sleep. The dreams.”

“Nightmares?” Loki only nods in response. He is exhausted.

“Ok Loki, what can I do?” Steve asks.

Loki only shakes his head in response.

Steve stands and helps Loki to his feet. “Ok, lets get you back to your bed.” Steve gently guides him by the elbow back to the detention area. He stands in bewilderment when he see’s that the cell is now completely empty having been prepped for repairs as soon as Loki was escorted out to meet with Steve. “Okay, this is not going to work…. He murmurs as he glances down the row to check the condition of the other cells. They are undamaged, but also empty with no beds or other furniture.

“C’mon Loki, lets try something else.” He maneuvers Loki’s body so he is supporting him under the arm and leads him up to own room. He opens the door and maneuvers Loki until he is sitting on the edge of the bed. “When when the last time you slept?”

Once again Loki doesn’t answer so instead he pushes Loki back onto the bed, helps him to lay down and then pulls his boots off for him. Once he is done, Loki curls onto his side. Steve pulls up a chair and takes a seat. He resolves to stay with the god until he is able to sleep.

Loki lays on the small bed and tries not to look towards the Captain. Although he is comforted by his presence, he does not want to think about the dreams that have been haunting him. And yet he cannot stop them.....
Standing at the edge of a great abyss. He looks over the edge, but can only see a dark chasm stretching down into untold depths. There is a cold wind rushing up into his face. He hears a sound behind him and looks back to see Hawkeye, Black Widow and Captain America striding towards him. Hawkeye has an arrow drawn back ready to release, Black Widow has both guns trained on his heart, but Captain America stands unarmed. Iron Man swoops in over head and Loki can hear the repulsor beams winding up to fire on him. The captain turns to the other Avengers, “don’t hurt him, I’ll take care of him.”

Loki steps away from the edge as Captain America steps closer to him. He pulls Loki into an embrace and whispers in his ear, “did you really think I could love you? That I would ever want a monster like you?” Then he pulls back and Loki can see it is now Frigga holding him. As he opens his mouth to speak he feels a sharp pain in his side and turns to see Steve pulling a knife out of the wound. “Why?” He cries out.

“If I could hurt you more, I would. You haven’t suffered enough.” And with that Steve pushes Loki over the edge and he falls. Into the darkness, just as when he fell from the Bifrost. And just like that time, he is found in the dark.

Steve sits at the side of the bed. “You need to try to sleep. I’ll be here.”

Loki only shakes his head in response so Steve tries again, “Do you want to tell me?”

The soft voice that answers is almost pitiful as he pleads, “talk to me. Don’t let me sleep.”

So he sits with the chair pulled up to the side of the bed and he begins to talk. He tells Loki of his time in the army. Of finding his friend after thinking him dead. He does not speak of losing his friend again or of the ice. When he hears Loki’s breathing even out and is sure he is finally asleep he steps away long enough to call for maintenance to check on repairs to Loki’s cell. And when Loki begins to whimper and cry in his sleep he kneels beside the bed, strokes the god's hair and quietly reassures him that he is still by his side. It only takes a few minutes of this to quiet Loki down again, but Steve resolves to stay by the bed all night if necessary.

Day 21

Loki wakes up when he hears Steve open the door and come in the room. The blonde man is carrying a tray of food. Loki can see that it is lunch foods and immediately looks towards the clock on the wall to see what time it is.

“Its just past 1pm. You slept for over 18 hours.” Steve places the tray down next to the bed and pulls up his chair. “I figured you would want something to eat and then probably want to shower.”

Loki looks to the Captain and quietly tells him, “thank you Steve.”

After eating lunch he asks to be taken back to his cell, where he spends the rest of the day and most of the night trying not to recall how comforting it was to be in Steve’s bed, how enticing Steve’s scent was on the pillow.

Day 22

Loki sits in his cell fuming. He is angry with himself for allowing the Captain to see his weakness. He wants the Captain to feel protective of him, not to pity him.
When Loki is not brought to the interrogation room Steve heads directly to the detention center to see what is going on. He finds Loki sitting in a chair next to the bed. He has a book in his hand and does not look up when Steve approaches.

“Loki? Are we not meeting today?”

The god does not look up from his book, does not acknowledge Steve’s presence.

“Loki?” He waits a few moments, but when Loki continues to ignore him, he retreats back to his own room.

When he is sure the Captain is gone, Loki places the book he had been pretending to read on a side table. He wants so much to talk to the Captain, but did not trust himself to do so. He is supposed to be convincing the Captain to help him, not whatever this is. Whatever is happening, he can’t get the Captain off his mind.

Day 23

In the pre dawn hours, Steve is standing outside of Loki’s cell. The god is twisting fitfully on his bed, lost in yet another nightmare. He quietly opens the door to the cell and walks to the side of the bed. After watching Loki for several more moments, he kneels down and places a hand on the god’s arm. Almost immediately Loki begins to calm and rest easier. Steve stays where he is for a few more minutes until he is sure Loki is sleeping peacefully then heads back to his own room.

He waits all day to meet with Loki but the call never comes. Steve tries to convince himself that Loki is resting and that is why they aren’t meeting.

Day 24

Steve is sitting at Loki’s bedside when the God wakes up. “Steve?”

“Did you sleep better?” Steve asks.

Loki looks around the room trying to shake off the confusion he is feeling at waking up with the Captain in his cell.

Steve can see that Loki is struggling and so he tells him, “you’ve been having a lot of nightmares. I know how that is. Figured it might help to have someone nearby to wake you if it gets too bad.”

Loki doesn’t respond, he simply gives a quick nod. Steve gives him a small smile and then stands up to leave the cell. Before he leaves he turns back, “will we be meeting?”

Loki looks at him, trying to keep his expression blank, “not today,” he responds quietly.

“Oh, okay,” Steve tells him as he exits the cell trying to push down his disappointment.

Day 25

Steve is in the gym when Natasha messages him around noon to tell him that when she took in his lunch, the god requested to meet with him. The Captain immediately feels a sense of relief and
quickly heads to the showers.

30 minutes later he is sitting in the interrogation room waiting for Natasha to bring Loki in. As soon as he is led in Steve stands, “Loki, you look better today.”

“I’m glad you approve Steve,” Loki drawls taking his usual seat. “You can’t imagine my surprise to waking up to you at my side.”

Steve reddens and tries to avoid looking towards the mirrored window.

“Loki……..” He sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose.

“Maybe next time I can coax you to move a little closer.” The God is practically leering at Steve now. The Captain is trying not to be angry, but Loki keeps pushing his buttons. The god grins at him and relaxes back into his chair completely satisfied with Steve’s reaction. “It’s nothing to be ashamed of Steve, but not to worry, your friends in the other room have not heard a word of this conversation.”

Loki can see the relief wash over Steve at his words. He knows he really should stop riling the man up, but he can’t help himself.
Chapter 8

Hot N Cold
Katy Perry

You change your mind
Like a girl changes clothes
Yeah you, PMS
Like a bitch
I would know

And you over think
Always speak
Cryptically

I should know
That you're no good for me

'Cause you're hot then you're cold
You're yes then you're no
You're in then you're out
You're up then you're down
You're wrong when it's right
It's black and it's white
We fight, we break up
We kiss, we make up
(You) You don't really want to stay, no
(You) But you don't really want to go-o
You're hot then you're cold
You're yes then you're no
You're in then you're out
You're up then you're down

We used to be
Just like twins
So in sync
The same energy
Now's a dead battery
Used to laugh bout nothing
Now you're plain boring

I should know that
You're not gonna change

Someone call the doctor
Day 26

Steve meets Loki and Natasha in the hallway just outside the interrogation room. He looks to The Black Widow and tells her, “I’ll take him from here.”

Natasha only nods in response and then enters the door to the room that looks into the one Steve and Loki have been meeting in. Steve takes Loki by the arm and leads him into the interrogation room, as he gets close he leans in and whispers in his ear, “no games today Loki.”

Loki smirks at the Captain, “I wouldn’t dream of it.” Then he is pulling away and taking his seat, trying to ignore the pleasant tingling on his skin where Steve had touched him.

Steve gives him a big smile, “lets talk about magic.”

Day 27

Loki is in a foul mood today. Steve can tell from the moment he walks in the door. He takes his seat and waits for the Asgardian to talk.

It doesn’t take long. “Your man of iron needs to stay far away from me,” he hisses.

“What did he do?” Steve asks warily.

Loki purses his lips and says nothing. His mind is turning over the conversation with Tony earlier in the detention center.

“Looking pretty comfortable there Loki,” Tony tells him as he stalks back and forth outside Loki’s cell. “I know what you’re doing. You think you can hide out here. Asgard is going to come for you and as soon as Fury wrings every last bit of information out of you, you’ll be handed over to them. Thor told us what you did there. You’ll be lucky if they execute you.” He sneers at Loki and pulls out the magic binders that Thor brought them. “Did you know Thor brought us these? Steve knows. Did he tell you that we have them?”

Loki turns his back to Tony when he see’s the binders, trying to push down the sudden spike of terror. He knows exactly what those are and what they will do to him. “Get out,” is all he says, grateful that his voice doesn’t betray his fear.

Loki looks at Steve and lifts his hands where he conjures an image of the magical binders on his palm. “When were you going to use these?” He snarls.

“We weren’t!” Steve exclaims. “Thor brought them in case you showed up.”

“But you kept them!”

“Of course we did. We don’t know what your intentions are. You yourself said you came here to conquer Earth.”

“And I told you I wanted to change my fate!” Loki yells as he slams his fist on the table and
vanishes.

He reappears inside the burned out ruins of what once was a home on Vanaheim. He walks through what is left of the structure as echoes of the past push at the boundaries in his mind. For just a moment he can hear the cries of the men who died at his hands, see the blood staining the walls and floor. He grasps on to the rage he felt as a way to quell the fear.

Turning away, he leaves his former home and heads the short distance to the neighboring farm where he watches a lone man working the land. He keeps himself hidden from view while he works a spell to increase the health of the farmers crops. Although the memories are painful, he needed to reassure himself that some men are capable of showing kindness. He only hopes that he is not wrong about the Captain.

Steve goes to the surveillance room and pulls up the footage of Tony’s visit to Loki. By the end he knows he needs to go straight to the gym to work off his anger as he tries to forget the look of pure terror on the gods face.

Day 28

Steve has had overnight to think about what Tony said to Loki. His anger has not lessoned and so he goes directly to the onboard lab where he knows he is likely to find him.

Sure enough, he finds the playboy standing in front of a computer screen.

He looks up briefly as Steve walks in, “What’s up Spangles?”

“What were you trying to accomplish by taunting Loki? He’s been cooperating and hasn’t caused any trouble, but you can’t just let that be enough can you?”

“He’s dangerous Cap. Or did you forget about how he tried to take over Earth or the people who died because of him? What he did to Barton! Or what he did on Asgard! What about that Steve?”

“First of all, he did not follow through with the plan to take over Earth, second how many have died because of you and the weapons you made? How many have Natasha or Fury or even I killed? None of us are innocent here. And I know what he did on Asgard, but that is a completely different realm. Asgard will decide how to deal with that,” the Captain snaps at him.

“They won’t get to decide anything! Not as long as we are hiding him. He’s manipulating you Steve. Can’t you see that? He has everyone hanging on his every word and he has you-”

“Has me what?” Steve interrupts.

“He has you visiting him at night, taking him to your own room. Come on Steve. Do you think we don’t see it?”

Steve walks up to Tony and stares him down. His voice is low and menacing as he says, “don’t go near him again.”

Tony watches Steve stalk out of the room. He can’t figure out why the Captain is protecting Loki. The guy is trouble and he’s playing them all for fools.
Every day, Steve feels this. This sense of hopeful trepidation as he approaches the interrogation room. Which Loki will he get today? Will it be the angry Loki whose looks make Steve want to shrink away with his tail between his legs. Or the one who frustrates Steve with his word games to the point of wanting to throttle the god. Or will it be the jovial Loki that lulls Steve into thinking that under different circumstances they could actually be friends. Or is it the Loki that can barely meet Steve’s gaze and when he does, it nearly breaks Steve’s heart with the look of fear and loss on his features.

But not today. No, today he gets the other one.

"Steve! How good to see you again," Loki practically coos while looking the captain up and down, his eyes lingering just a little too long in certain places.

So that's how it's going to be today, the blonde man thinks to himself while trying not to groan out his frustration. He knows this session will end with him feeling frustrated, embarrassed and more than a little aroused. He can’t figure out why he doesn't just walk right back out of the room when Loki is in this mood.

20 minutes later Steve has finally had enough. He is around the table in a flash with Loki shoved up against the wall in front of him. His arm is across Loki’s neck applying just enough pressure to make some color start to appear on his otherwise pale flesh. His body is pressed tightly up against the gods, ensuring Loki can feel his arousal.

"Keep it up Loki. You may get more than you bargain for," the Captain whispers harshly in his ear, then he steps back and eyes the man.

Internally Loki is thrilled with this response, but outwardly he slightly tilts his head, gives a small smirk and says, "oh, I'm counting on it."

These simple words, late that night, they are Steve’s undoing when he replays the scene in his head. He pulls out his sketch book and begins to draw the look that was on Loki’s face at the time. The smug little smirk when he knew he had pushed Steve to the limit yet again. As he transfers the details from his memory to the paper his mind starts to wander back over the conversation and he finds himself reacting all over again.

Unlike this morning, he doesn't have to hide his arousal behind his anger. This time he is alone and can give into it. He stares at the completed drawing and then puts the sketch pad on the nightstand. He strips off his jeans and t shirt, then turns off the light and lays on his back. He looks at the ceiling trying to hold off on touching himself.

The anticipation only excites him more until he can no longer take the ache in his loins. He runs his palm across the front of his boxer shorts. Just a slight brush as he imagines it is Loki touching him. He pulls his boxers off and tosses them on the floor allowing his cock to spring up. Leaning over, he pulls a bottle of lube from the nightstand drawer and quickly applies some to his hand. He wraps his fist around his cock and squeezes just until it becomes painful, closing his eyes to enjoy the sensation. Then he begins to slowly stroke along his cock, pausing every few strokes to run his thumb over the head. It doesn't take long before he is coming into his hand with a groan as he tries not to let the gods name slip from his lips.
Day 30

“Is there anyone special waiting for you at home?” Loki asks out of the blue.


“Why ever not Steve? Surely you could have your pick of many willing partners.”

The blush that comes over Steve is quite endearing. "I uh, guess I haven't found that right person.”

“Not every encounter has to be a relationship. Two consenting adults can enjoy each others.... company without the entanglement of a relationship.”

"I guess I am just old fashioned then. I don't necessarily think you need to wait to be married but you should at least be in love.”

“And have you ever been in love Steve?”

Steve’s face is positively flushed as he tries to avoid looking directly at Loki. "I've been close, but never actually in love."

"Ahhhhhh..... well that has to be...quite........frustrating at times."

Steve huffs out a laugh, "more and more everyday." Did I just say that? Oh god. What was I thinking.

Day 31

“See that's just it, people only see Captain America. Steve Rogers isn't important. I'm not allowed to have feelings, to get angry or to even be human. I have to be this symbol of virtue and strength,” Steve explains to Loki as he stands up from the table and begins to pace.

“Are you saying you're not?”

“I'm saying that it's more complicated than that. The pressure to not let people down, to be what the world needs me to be, sometimes I feel trapped.”

“So you're saying there is more to Captain America than meets the eye. Maybe something a little dangerous?” Loki smirks at him as his eyes follow the captain around the room.

With a nervous laugh, Steve replies, "I wouldn't say dangerous. Maybe just not as perfect and virtuous as people want to believe."

"Ohhh a dark side, do tell." Loki leans forward with an interested grin on his face.

Again the nervous laugh, "it's nothing quite that interesting, really. it's......." he trails off not quite knowing what to say as he takes his seat again.

Loki says nothing, gives him time to work out what he wants to say.

Steve begins again, "you know how you are raised to believe that things are a certain way? That if you do certain things, adhere to a set of rules, think a certain way, act a certain way, then things will
be alright."

Steve is so lost in what he is trying to say that he doesn't see Loki swallow hard and lean slightly forward. He of all people understands that feeling all too well.

"When I was chosen for the super soldier program I was told it was because I am a good man..... and they needed that because the serum enhanced whatever was already in you.... but they never considered what else was in me..... the parts I kept locked away."

Loki continues to stay quiet. He is intrigued by where this conversation is going.

"Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to live as Steve Rogers, a life beyond all this, friends, family, someone special."

"You have friends," Loki tells him.

"Captain America has team mates. It’s not the same."

"OK well surely there are many women lining up to date you if you choose to pursue that."

"That's not.... not what I want."

"Then what is it that you want?"

Steve blushed and turns away and Loki knows the moment has been lost. He will have to revisit this topic again.

Later that night Steve wakes up achingly hard. He knows he was dreaming of the god again. He turns on his back and stares at the ceiling in frustration. After several minutes it becomes clear that his arousal is not going down. He thinks back over the dream again.

He is face down on the bed, hips up and Loki is buried deep within his body. He can’t help but to push his hips back each time Loki thrusts his own hips forward. The gods hands are gripping his waist painfully as he grunts with each forward movement. Lowering his body, Loki reaches and takes Steve’s cock in his hand, moving along the shaft in rhythm to his thrusts.

Steve rolls to the side and grabs the lube from the night stand. He rubs some on the flushed flesh of his erection and begins to stroke along his length imaging it is Loki touching him. He is so close, but it is not enough. He grabs the lube again and squirts more on his fingers and then resumes stroking with one hand while he works his other hand lower. Its better, not as good as he imagines the real thing to be, but it is enough and he comes with one hand wrapped around his dick and 2 fingers buried in his ass while he moans out the gods name.

Day 32

“You have been meeting with Loki for weeks now and we are no closer to learning what he actually wants,” Director Fury tells Steve. “All we are getting is a bunch of information we can get from Thor, but without the pre teen hormone charged flirtation sessions. I want to know why he is here. He says he wants to change his fate, but hasn’t given any indication of what he wants you to do to help him.”
Steve glares at the director and says, “I am making progress. He has to trust me to open up to me. Have you ever thought that he knows you are listening and analyzing every conversation?”

“Oh, I’m sure he does know, that’s why I doubt this is going to work. He’s too smart to let something slip by accident.”

“Exactly, which means we need to continue to play his game,” Steve tells him. He is feeling a little panicked. He doesn’t want Loki sent away.

“Then find out what he wants.”

Day 33

Steve is standing just outside of Loki’s cell staring in at the god. Loki is sleeping on the bed, facing the glass, laying on his side. The blonde is studying his face, taking in his features, the prominent cheekbones, the soft lips, even the worry lines between his eyebrows, smoothed out now in sleep. He wants to remember each detail so he can draw it later, but that is not why he is here and so he taps on the glass.

Loki opens one eye and addresses the Captain, “I was wondering how long you were planning on standing there.”

Steve sighs, of course Loki knew he was there. “I need to talk to you.”

“So talk,” Loki tells him as he sits up.

Instead of responding, Steve looks up at the camera that is currently recording their conversation. Loki follows his gaze and for a moment a small smile appears on his face.

“Ok, they can’t see us right now, but I suggest you hurry because they will surely want to check on their faulty cameras right away.”

“Fury is getting anxious. He wants to know what you want me to do to help you change your fate. If he doesn’t get something soon, he will turn you over to Asgard.”

For a moment Loki doesn’t respond as he thinks over his options. “Ok Steve. Tomorrow.” With that he glances back to the camera and then lays back down on his bed.

After Steve leaves, Loki lies awake staring at the ceiling. He knows he needs Steve. The problem is he doesn’t know why. He had hoped that by ingratiating himself to the Captain he could keep him close, ready for whatever the fates had in store. He just wishes he knew what that was because he is not sure how much longer he can keep this up. It doesn’t even occur to Loki that maybe just having Steve close by is exactly what the fates had planned.
Lost in a dream  
Nothing is what it seems  
Searching my head  
For the words that you said  
Tears filled my eyes  
As we said our last goodbyes  
This sad scene replays  
Of you walking away  
My body aches from mistakes  
Betrayed by lust  
We lied to each other so much  
That in nothing we trust  
Time and again  
She repeats let's be friends  
I smile and say yes  
Another truth bends,  
I must confess  
I try to let go, but I know  
We'll never end 'til we're dust  
We lied to each other again  
But I wish I could trust  
My body aches of mistakes  
Betrayed by lust  
We lied to each other so much  
That in nothing we trust  
God help me please, on my knees  
Betrayed by lust  
We lied to each other so much  
That in nothing we trust  
How could this be happening to me  
I'm lying when I say, "Trust me"  
I can't believe this is true  
Trust hurts  
Why does trust equal suffering  
Absolutely nothing we trust
Day 34

Steve is already in the interrogation room when Loki is brought in. He pulls out his chair and takes a seat with his back to the wall. Loki chooses to stand and starts to prowl the room. He knows he has to give Steve something or face being sent to Asgard. He turns to face Steve and just as he begins to speak there is a crash of thunder overhead. He snaps his mouth back shut and narrows his eyes at Steve. “I trusted you……” he begins.

Steve can hear the anger and the hurt in Loki’s voice. “I didn’t know….I swear Loki.” The god only continues to glare at Steve. “Just stay here. I’ll go find out what is going on. I won’t let him take you. Just please, trust me okay?”

Loki gives an almost imperceptible nod and then turns away as Steve leaves the room, locking it behind him, he heads directly for Director Fury’s office. He walks straight in without waiting to be announced. Thor is seated across from Director Fury. Fury simply inclines his head towards the chair next to Thor who nods in greeting to Steve.

“There has been an attack on Odin’s weapons vault. We believe they were after Loki’s scepter.”

“You have the scepter?” Steve asks, trying to keep his voice level. “Since when?”

“It was discovered in the king’s weapons vault some weeks ago. It is heavily protected by magic and we have not been able to determine for sure where it came from or why, but we are sure Loki is involved since he was last in possession of it. I know I was remise in not bringing this news sooner. Has there been word of Barton? It is possible that Loki’s hold on him has weakened without the scepter.”

Steve looks pointedly at Director Fury to see how he is planning handling this. Fury pushes a button on his desk. “Yes?” says a familiar male voice.

“My office, now,” is all the Director responds as he holds up a finger to indicate for Thor to wait. The 3 men sit for several minutes in awkward silence until the office door opens and Clint walks in. Thor immediately turns to him, surprised to see the archer.

“Are you well?”

Clint doesn’t want to answer truthfully. He knows if he does he will not be returned to active duty. So he says nothing about the nightmares, nothing about the tremors that make it difficult to shoot accurately, nothing about the debilitating headaches that come all too frequently. “I’m fine. Ready to get back to work,” he lies instead, looking at Director Fury.

“Truly friend? You suffer to no ill effects from the scepters influence?” Thor inquires.

“I did…. At first,” he says, again looking at Fury, “but with time that has gotten better. I’m good as new in fact,” Clint lies again. Although he is being honest in that his symptoms have lessened over time, he still suffers every day.

Steve wants to bring the conversation back on track, “you said the vault was attacked?”

“Yes, an unknown assailant breached the vault. He attempted to make off with the scepter, but I was alerted and able to stop the theft.” Thor turns to director fury, “have there been any sightings of my brother here on Midgard?”
“Not at the moment. And you think it was Loki who took it to Asgard?”

Clint jerks his head around to glare at Director Fury. Why have they not told Thor that Loki is on the helicarrier? The Asgardian continues, oblivious to the looks being exchanged between Agent Barton and Fury.

"We don't know. Very few people could have breached the king’s vault without leaving a trace and the protection spells on the scepter are telling. It is possible that Loki himself placed it there." Thor turns back to the director, "If Loki is indeed behind this, I have no doubt there will be more to his scheme."

"But why?" Steve asks. "Why would he take it there, just to steal it back? And why be so obvious in trying to do it? That doesn’t sound like Loki’s style."

Thor turns directly to his friend, "the power within the stones calls out to be used," is all he says by way of explanation. "We will keep the scepter under guard of course and Odin is placing additional protections on it in case Loki tries to come for it."

Steve has been staring at his hands. He is troubled, but also greatly relieved by the fact that they still are not telling Thor that Loki is in fact a few floors below them. Fury can see the stress on Steve's face and he needs to end this meeting quickly before he or Clint says something.

“Thank you Thor, we appreciate the information,” Fury tells him as he stands to indicate the ending of the meeting.

“And thank you Director. I will be returning to Asgard to ask Heimdall to continue to try and locate my brother, along with the thief.”

Thor walks out of the office and heads directly up to the deck where he once again uses Mjolnir to depart the helicarrier.

Once he is sure that Thor has left, Fury turns to Steve, “right now I want you to find out from your new friend what the story is with the scepter.”

Steve practically runs back to the interrogation room where he finds Loki gone. He turns around to go search for him just as the god appears back in the room.

“Where were you?” Steve asks. When Loki doesn’t respond he steps closer to him and reaches out to touch his arm. “I asked you to trust me.” Loki still doesn’t respond so he withdraws his hand and takes a seat at the table. "Thor said Asgard has the scepter."
Loki sits down as well, his expression unreadable. "Do they? And what do they plan to do with it? Are they using it to attempt to locate me?"

"He said someone broke into the weapons vault. They were stopped before they got away with the scepter. Odin has placed additional protections on it."

Steve is sure he sees fear flicker across Loki’s features before he composes himself again. "Did you take it to Asgard?"

"Why ever would I do that? To break into Odin’s personal vault? Why, the skill needed to accomplish such a feat would be well more than my humble abilities," the god answers with a small smirk trying to mask his anxiety. "As long as I can stay hidden, I’m okay, he reassures himself.

"OK so we have established that you did it, but why?"

Loki smiles innocently at the Captain, "that is the question, isn’t it?" He says.

Later that night he opens the way to Yggdrasil to take a look for himself. He is relieved to see his protections still in place, augmented by Odin’s own, but is troubled by a familiar taint of dark magic. He briefly looks in on his mother, unseen as she sits in her gardens and then goes to check on the tesseract.

Day 35

"Who do you think tried to break into the vault and what would they want with the scepter?"

"My dear Steve, I should think those answers would require a little incentive don’t you think?"

Steve sits back in his chair and looks at the man across from him. "What do you want Loki?"

"You know what I want. That has not changed. But for this instance I think I can accept some time outside of my cell and this room. It is rather dull you see."

Steve knows that Loki can get out of his cell at anytime, he had just proven that by not remaining in the interrogation room the day before. The fact that he willingly remains in their custody makes him believe Loki wants to be there, so the additional risk of letting him out seems minimal. "What did you have in mind?"

"A meal. In the mess hall. You, Nick, and that delightful Iron Man."

"Not going to happen." Steve knows he can’t take Loki into the mess hall. His being there is to be kept secret. Only a handful of people know his location and it needs to stay that way.

"So an outing to the upper deck is also out of the question I suppose?" Steve’s only response is to look at the god as if he were asking for the moon, which he might as well be.

"You know I can't do that," he finally tells the dark haired man.

With a pout, Loki looks to Steve, "then what do you have to offer me?"

"I don't.... I don't know what I can give you without drawing attention to you."
"OK then how about something a little less conspicuous? Lunch? In your room?"

When the captain doesn’t immediately answer Loki tells him, "last chance Steve. If you want information about the scepter I suggest you take it."

Steve looks sharply at Loki, this is not where he expected this to go, but the idea does appeal to him and he needs to be able to give something to Director Fury to keep him placated. "Ok. Tomorrow. We’re done for today," he says and immediately gets up to leave the room.

“I look forward to it. Until tomorrow Steve." the trickster tells him without turning to look at him.

Steve is left standing trying to figure out how things got so turned around that he has now agreed to having lunch with the god in his quarters.

Day 36

"What is this?" Loki asks as he pulls Steve’s sketch book out from its spot on the book shelf and begins to thumb through it.

Steve grabs it out of his hands, "it nothing!" he snaps and places it on the nightstand closest to himself.

"Why Steve, do you have some deep shameful secrets hidden in the pages of your book? I wonder what devious thoughts run through the mind of such a righteous man."

"Its... it's nothing. It's just personal ok?" the Captain stammers.

"Oh yes. I can see that it is very personal. Something of a sexual nature perhaps? About someone you desire possibly? Hmmm I wonder what could be in that book that has you turning such a lovely shade of red."

In fact Steve is blushing furiously. He can feel it spreading across his checks and down his neck. "That’s enough!" he tells Loki using his captain’s voice. Hoping it will end the conversation.

"Ooohhh. I rather like that. Take charge Captain. Tell me what you want me to do." Loki can’t deny the little twist of excitement in his gut when Steve uses that tone on him. Such power. Such forcefulness. A fine specimen indeed.

Steve is trying not to stare at Loki’s pink lips. He knows what Loki saw in his head weeks ago. “I hope you like pastrami. I had it brought in from my favorite place,” Steve tells him to change the subject and to give him an excuse to look away.

“I don’t know what pastrami is, but I shall take your word for it Steve,” Loki smirks at him. Steve watches anxiously while Loki takes his first bite of his sandwich. The look of pleasure that overcomes Loki’s features is worth the trouble he had getting the meal flown in to him on an incoming cargo shipment. The men eat in silence until there are only a few bites left.

“I dare say Steve, if you continue to feed me like this, you may get more from me than you ever hoped for,” the god says with another smirk, causing Steve to blush yet again.

“Now, let’s get down to business, you show me yours and I will show you mine.”

Steve nearly spits out the water he was about to swallow. Loki is pleased with the reactions he can
continue to elicit from Steve. “Why Steve, surely you didn’t misinterpret my words? I simply meant that I would like to hear something about yourself before I give you what you want. A little give and take if you will. A chance for me to keep getting to know you better.”

Steve is now bright red and is avoiding Loki’s gaze. “Um ok. What do you want to know?”

“What makes you so special?”

“Nothing, I’m just a kid from Brooklyn……”

“Come now Steve, don’t be so modest.”

Steve tries not to roll his eyes as he thinks about what he wants to tell Loki, “when I was younger I lived with my mom. She was a nurse.”

“And what of your father?” Loki asks.

“He, uh, died when I was young,” Steve answers looking down at his hands. He rarely talks about himself and almost never about his family. “We didn’t have much, but we had enough,” Steve smiles wistfully as he describes the small home he grew up in.

Loki listens intently, reflecting on the vast differences in their upbringings. While Steve was raised with meager possessions he clearly felt loved and a sense of belonging. He himself was raised in the palace on Asgard with anything and everything he could desire at his fingertips, but unlike Steve, he never felt like he belonged, always felt different and alone. The one thing they had in common was a deep love for their mothers. Loki was always close to Frigga. She was the one person he felt truly comfortable with and he misses her terribly.

“Loki? Where’d you go there?” Steve asks softly breaking Loki’s reverie. The god blinks his eyes and straightens his back, firmly setting the all too familiar look of arrogant disdain back on his face.

Steve can see the change in Loki’s demeanor and he knows he will get little more from the god today. Before he can say anything though Loki says, “I took the scepter to Asgard just before coming here. It is dangerous and even more so in the hands of someone such as myself.”

The surprised look on Steve’s face amuses Loki, “a deal is a deal Captain. Did I not agree to give you information regarding the scepter?”

Steve only nods not wanting to cause the god to stop talking.

“I do not know for sure who tried to steal it, but I would venture to guess it would be those that gave it to me.” Loki stands and begins to pace around the small room, hands clasped behind his back. Loki approaches the door to the room and Steve stands as well thinking Loki is ready to return to his cell. “It is worrisome that they have come to retrieve it. I think I would like to go back to my cell, if that’s ok.”

“Yeah sure, lets go,” Steve answers confused by Loki’s sudden change in mood.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 10

Crisis Time
Bad Religion

There's a feeling about myself that I can't understand
It's a foreboding sense that I see all around the land

When the wheel of fortune turns progressively depraved
It's the manifestation of a biospheric decay

Keep yourself in line, there's no design
The new paradigm is crisis time

Luxury was privilege and I knew it all along
But to let human reason get trumped by emotion is wrong

All the bonds were broken when I said I loved you so
But rejection of a fantasy is just a way to help you grow

Keep yourself in line, there's no design
The new paradigm is crisis time

Keep yourself in line, there's no design
The new paradigm is crisis time

There's a feeling about myself, I feel it oh so strong
It's a romantic notion and I've cared about it far too long

On the crest of progress we can't balance on the wave
If the measure of success is only tallied in the lives we save

Keep yourself in line, there's no design
The new paradigm is crisis time

Day 37

Steve is standing outside of Loki's cell. It is 3am and he is being sent out on a mission. He doesn't know why, but his stomach has been in knots since Director Fury gave him the mission briefing. It should be a simple mission, raid a suspected Hydra base, capture any survivors, secure any weapons
and transport everything back to a secure shield facility. Easy in and out, nothing he hasn't done a hundred times before and yet he cannot shake the nagging feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Steve watches the peacefully sleeping god. He hates to wake him, but wants to let the god know he may be gone for a few days and so he forces himself to tap on the glass. Loki wakes up almost immediately. When he see's Steve standing outside the cell he stretches and then pads over to the glass with a curious look on his face. "Late night visits to the prisoner Steve? How positively clandestine."

Steve tries unsuccessfully to hide the smile on his face. Loki can drive him crazy, but his playful teasing is helping to ease his nerves. "I'm being sent out on a mission. Probably be gone for a few days."

Loki walks back the chair in his room and takes a seat, "and you are telling me this because....."

"I didn't want you to worry, I guess," Steve answers suddenly feeling foolish.

"I think you overestimate my fondness for you Captain," Loki tells him, the expression on his face unreadable.

Steve is hurt and a little angry. "Fine, forget I said anything. We'll pick up the questioning when I get back," he huffs angrily at the god and turns to leave.

"Steve, wait!" Loki calls after him as he gets up and approaches the glass. Steve stops and walks back to the cell. "Thank you. For letting me know. Be safe."

The soldier gives a shy smile as his stomach clenches pleasantly, "thank you Loki."

It is night and the mission starts off as any other. Steve and The Black Widow left the quinjet at a private airstrip and hiked the 3 miles in to the large compound nestled deep inside the Russian wilderness. They are hidden just outside a fence line surrounding the compound and had been watching the traffic in and out of the compound until the sun went down.

"I don’t think we are going to get much more information. We should probably go soon," Natasha tells the Captain.

Steve nods in agreement and tries to ignore the twisting in his stomach. They have very little intelligence regarding the layout of the building, but they have been watching the guard movements for 2 hours.

They sneak inside the fence line and head for the door they chose to enter through. The door is located within an open maintenance garage. Natasha picks the lock, but they are confronted by troops as soon as they enter the door. Steve raises his shield to protect them both from incoming fire. Natasha crouches low and gets off a couple of shots to drive back the attackers around a corner. The Captain throws his shield towards the wall where it deflects around the blind corner and he can hear it hit its mark. Of the 5 enemy soldiers they encountered, Natasha has shot 2 and Steve is pretty sure 2 more are down just around the corner, which leaves just 1.

Natasha pulls out a small mirror and looks around the corner where she confirms that only one soldier is left standing. He has a small device in his hand that he attaches to the wall, then pushes some buttons causing it to light up. "Steve we have to go," she whispers as she angles the mirror so he can see.
Steve knows what he is looking at and his fears are confirmed when the soldier begins to run down the hall way, ducks behind a steel door and seals it behind himself. "Can you disarm it?" he asks Natasha as he approaches the device. "What if there are prisoners like the other Hydra bases?"

She takes a look at the device and her stomach sinks, "its too late." she hisses as she grabs Steve’s arm and pulls him back towards the entrance. He pauses to grab his shield and then follows behind her just as the explosion hits. He is thrown forward by the blast and impacts against the wall. Natasha is only slightly luckier as she had just turned the corner back into the other hallway. The hallway behind them is now a mass of impassable rubble. She runs to Steve and finds him unconscious, checks his pulse and calls for an evac.

Over the next several minutes she can hear more explosions throughout the facility. She flinches and huddles close to Steve when there is a large blast just outside the exit door. After looking over the Captain’s obvious injuries, she moves to the exit and finds she cannot open the door. She pulls out a tiny camera and runs a wire underneath. All she can see is more destruction.

Day 38

Natasha is sitting on the floor next to Steve when he groans and opens his eyes. His eyes widen and he struggles to sit up as he remembers where they are. “Hey, whoa there. Stay down big guy,” Natasha soothes, placing a hand on Steve’s arm. Her eyes flick down to his abdomen where there is a large red stain on his uniform. He follows her gaze down and can just see the open wound underneath the large tear in the blue fabric. When he shifts, the pain causes him to suck in his breath. Natasha worriedly looks at the pooling blood below Steve’s side. “Let me take a look,” she says as she carefully pulls back a piece of the decimated fabric. The wound doesn’t look too large, but she can see the glint of a piece of metal embedded in the flesh. “Okay, well that’s not good. Evac should be here in a few hours Rogers, just stick with me until then.”

He tries to give her a reassuring smile, but it comes out as a grimace as he attempts to settle into a more comfortable position. He reaches up to release the buckle on his cowl and removes it slowly. It comes away sticky with blood. His normally blonde hair, now tinged red.

Steve leans his head back against the wall and stares up at the ceiling. He is startled out of his thoughts when Natasha clears her throat. “So uh, Loki…..”

He turns his eyes to her, but doesn’t shift his body. His head is spinning and his side is a blaze of agony and so he wants to limit his movements until the evac team arrives. He doesn’t answer right away, so she prompts again, “What’s going on with that Rogers?”

“What do you want me to say Tasha? I’m trying to get information from him. It’s not easy. He’s a hard guy to figure out.”

“I’m worried Steve. It takes a certain type of person to get close enough to someone without being compromised, we talked about this before.”

Steve frowns at her, “just say it. I already know what Tony thinks. So just say it.”

To her credit she doesn’t shy away from his stare. “I think you’re compromised Steve,” she tells him softly as if trying to soften the harshness of the words.

The Captain raises his hand to run it through his hair. It comes away streaked with blood and he sits staring at it. “What do you want me to say? I didn’t expect this to happen. I’m not even sure when it
“When what happened?” Natasha pushes.

Steve quickly realizes his mistake and tries to fix it, “he’s a complicated guy, but he really isn’t that bad. I don’t mind talking to him.”

Natasha decides not to pursue the matter for now, but resolves to go back and watch all the surveillance footage of Steve and Loki’s meetings again. “Try to get some rest. Hopefully they will be here soon.”

It’s hours later when Natasha hears the voice over the radio in her ear, “anyone call for a devilishly handsome extraction expert?”

“Tony, do you have my signal? We need to get Cap out of here. He’s banged up pretty bad and has lost a lot of blood.”

Tony pulls up Natasha’s tracking signal on his heads up display. He can immediately see that there is several tons of concrete and other debris that will need to be moved in order to get to them. “Yeah okay. This is gonna take a little bit,” Tony tells her, his usually boisterous personality oddly subdued.

Day 39

Tony has been working nonstop for hours. Even with the other Shield agents working with him, it is taking longer than he would like to dig Steve and Natasha out. “How’s Cap holding up?”

Natasha looks over to Steve. He has been fading in and out of consciousness for the last few hours. “He’s holding on, but you need to hurry.”

“Understood.”

It is mid morning when Tony finally blasts away the last of the debris blocking the door and cuts an opening to get inside. He stands back and lets the medical team go in first to tend to the Captain. Steve is carried out on a stretcher and quickly loaded onto the waiting helicopter as Natasha follows close behind with his cowl and shield in her hands.

Day 40

Natasha walks into Director Fury’s office and sits down across from him. “He is out of surgery. Should be okay, but he lost a lot of blood, has some internal injuries and a skull fracture.”

“Good, now why did you feel the need to come tell me this in person?” The director asks.

“I’m concerned about him. I’m not sure it’s a good idea to keep him working on Loki.”

“I see. Your concerns are duly noted. Now if there is nothing else?” He inclines his head towards the door to indicate that the conversation is over.
Day 41

Loki has taken to pacing the length of his cell. Steve has not returned from his mission and the god is getting worried. His food has been delivered by a Shield flunky for several days now, leading him to believe that the Widow is with him. This thought only offers a small amount of comfort.

Day 42

When he cannot stand it any longer, Loki leaves his cell and appears directly in director fury's office. The man is sitting at his desk and looks up casually at the intrusion, "what is it Loki? I'm a busy man."

"Where is he?" the god demands.

"Barging in here and demanding information is not going to get you anywhere," fury answers calmly as he leans back in his chair.

"If you do not tell me where he is, I will tear this helicarrier apart!" Loki growls.

"Have a seat," he tells the Asgardian, gesturing to the chair across from his desk.

Loki stares angrily at the director for several moments, but when it is clear Fury is not going to give in, he reluctantly takes the offered seat. Back ramrod straight, he glares at the director.

"Look, you and I both know that we can't contain you, so I will level with you, he was on a mission," the Director begins.

"I am aware of that, I expected him back already. Where is he?" Loki snaps with ice in his voice.

"Captain Rogers is currently being treated for injuries he sustained during the mission."

"Where?" Loki asks quietly, trying to ignore the fear gripping his chest.

With a sigh the director tells him, "needless to say, you cannot be seen. He is in the infirmary, 4 floors down, aft."

"Thank you Director," Loki says and disappears.

The nurse nods her head to acknowledge Director Fury as she checks on her patients I.V. line. He has been in this room for hours. She should have found it odd that the director would spend so much time in the infirmary even if the patient is Captain America, but she is relatively new and doesn’t know any better.

Steve opens his eyes and is shocked to find Loki dozing in a chair next to his hospital bed. The nurse walks into the room to check on him, but barely glances at the sleeping god. "How long has he been here?" he asks quietly gesturing to Loki, trying to calm his apprehension.

"Director Fury has been here pretty much all day."

"Director Fury?" Steve asks confused.
"Yes, he seems quite fond of you. Very fussy about your care," she says as she leaves the room closing the door behind her.

Steve nods absentmindedly to her as she exits and turns his attention back to the dark haired god. He smiles to himself in relief then rests his head back against the pillow.

The next time he wakes up Loki is sitting up in the chair thumbing through a magazine. Steve watches him for a moment, studying his expression. He wishes for a paper and pencil to capture his features, the relaxed look on his face. The lack of arrogant sneer, this is the version of Loki that he likes to see, even if it all too rare.

As if he can sense Steve’s gaze, Loki turns to the blonde. "Ah there you are. I was getting ready to head back to my cell. Even it has better accommodations than this room," he remarks casually.

"Does fury know you are impersonating him?"

"I'm sure he is aware of the reports, over exaggerated mind you, of himself sitting vigil by your bedside and what not," he answers with a dismissive wave of his hand.

Steve grins, "awww I didn't know you cared," he teases.

Loki gives him a bored look and responds, "well I know how much you enjoy our little talks and so I needed to make sure you were recovering adequately."

"I see..." is all Steve replies all he tries to hold back a smile which causes Loki to smile in return.

Day 43

Steve is submitting to yet another examination by yet another doctor. He is fairly certain most of these doctors are not there to actually treat his injuries. They just want a look at the super soldier. "Please remove your shirt," the graying man tells Steve.

The Captain complies without complaint. As the doctor is listening to his heartbeat Loki opens the door and steps into the room. "Director Fury, I'm glad you're here. The patient has been unwilling to provide a blood sample for testing. Can you order him to cooperate."

Loki has to tear his eyes away from Steve's exposed abs and chest to address the doctor, "why do you need the sample?"

The doctor blinks as he fumbles for an answer, "it's standard procedure to take blood samples and run tests."

"What kind of tests? What specifically are you looking for?"

"Um... infections, any other abnormalities."

Loki looks to Steve who gives a minute shake of his head, "I don't think that is necessary in this case. In fact, I think he is ready to be released."

The doctor looks downright incensed now, "the patient is to stay under medical care until he is deemed ready to leave the infirmary."

Loki merely smiles at the doctor. "Captain Rogers has been deemed ready to leave the infirmary. In fact he will be leaving now."
"On whose authority?" the doctor foolishly blurts out.

Steve tries to hide his smile as he watches the exchange. Loki has the Directors mannerisms down perfectly. "On mine. Now I suggest you leave before I have you removed from this ship immediately."

"We are still in the air. You can't do that."

"Can't I?"

"You wouldn't."

Loki only stares blankly at the doctor as he crosses his arms over his chest. The doctor waits a few seconds before realizing his mistake and quickly exits the room, "I'll ready his paperwork."

When the door closes Steve lets out the laugh he has been holding back, "that wasn't very nice."

"Was I to let them take your blood? They aren't interested in your care. They just want another look at the serum."

Steve looks at the god and smiles again, "thank you Loki. I know they already have samples of my blood, but I don’t want to give anymore if I can help it."

"You're welcome Steve, Now please put your shirt on. We are going back to your quarters and you don't need everyone gawking at you on the way."

Steve grabs the shirt and pulls it back over his head while Loki tries not to watch the muscles flexing across his torso as he does.

Day 44

Steve has spent the last several hours being debriefed regarding his mission. He feels bad enough that the mission was deemed a failure, and now he has to spend tomorrow reviewing the error in strategy that led up to his injuries. He hates this part of the job. He knows he messed up and the debriefing took so long he didn’t have time to meet with Loki. He knows he has a busy day ahead tomorrow and he probably won't have time to talk to the god then either.

The only consolation is that Natasha wasn’t injured on the mission. The Captain has been purposely avoiding the reports regarding any enemy casualties. Thankfully, no hostages were found at this facility.

Day 45

Steve is finally back in his quarters after hours of meetings. They were boring, but not unproductive. He is now set up for training on some new equipment that Tony has been developing that may help detect explosives better. At any rate, he hopes the new technology will be able to save lives in the future.

He lays on his bed mentally exhausted from the day when he hears a knock on his door. Wearily he gets up and opens it. He is startled to see Loki standing there and tries hard to ignore the little twist of pleasure in his belly. After several moments Loki clears his throat, "is this not a good time?"
"What? Oh yeah, sorry, come in. Director Fury again today?" Steve asks gesturing to Loki's tall frame.

"Actually no. I figured it was late enough that I could chance being out as myself."

The Captain frowns at that, "you know you can't be seen outside of your cell Loki. It's too big of a risk that someone might see you and freak out."

"I know. I was careful. I only appeared just outside your door. I figured I would knock and give you warning rather than just show up at the foot of your bed. If you would rather, I can just do that next time."

Steve sighs and tries not to blush, "yeah ok, you're right. Sorry."

"Don't be. Your concern for my safety is endearing, unnecessary, but endearing."

"It's not just your safety Loki. I know you can take care of yourself."

"Oh? Then what is it?"

Steve looks stricken as he tries to figure out how to answer. Which causes the god to chuckle, "not to worry Steve. You don't have to answer that."

Day 46

"I cannot break the wards, they are too strong," Malekith explains as he kneels in front of the Titan Thanos. "If the scepter is to be retrieved I will need Loki to remove them."

Thanos smiles, sending a chill down Malekith's spine, "then find him. There will be no more failures."

"Yes my lord," the dark elf responds as he all but jumps to his feet and rushes out of Thanos' sight. With a gesture the Titan summons The Other to his side, "see that he doesn't forget his failure."

The Other doesn't acknowledge the command, but Thanos knows it will be obeyed without question.

It is many hours before Malekith's screams finally quiet.

Chapter End Notes

There is a companion piece over in The First of Many. Chapter 7 This is Not Love
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

They get just a little closer......

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 11

Disenchanted Lullaby
Foo Fighters

Disenchanted Lullaby
Sing me yours, I'll sing you mine
Sing with me now what's a boy to do?
What's a boy to do?
Sing along for yesterday
Sing along my soul today
Sing along another song for you
What's a boy to do?
I may be scattered
A little shattered
What does it matter?
No one has a fit like I do
I'm the only one that's fits you
Whispering to pass the time
Whisper for the days gone by
Whisper with the voice inside of you
With this ring you will be mine
With this ring I'll multiply
With this ring surrendering to you
What's a boy to do?

I may be scattered
A little shattered
What does it matter?
No one has a fit like I do
I'm the only one that's fits you

Day 47

Steve is at Loki’s cell first thing in the morning to escort him to the interrogation room. "Where is the widow this morning?" the god asks.

"I decided to give her the day off of escort duty," Steve answers.
Loki can tell by the tone of his voice that there is more to it than that, but he lets it go. They walk the rest of the way in silence as Steve thinks about his conversation with Natasha earlier in the morning.

"You can take the day off from escorting Loki."

"Oh? Are you not meeting with him?"

"We're meeting. I just don't think you need to escort him anymore," Steve can hear her breathing on the com line even though she doesn't respond.

Finally she says, "Steve, I don't think this is a good idea. You should probably spend less time with him, not more."

"It's fine Natasha, really. As a matter of fact, I already cleared it with Fury so you can be freed up for more important things."

Day 48

Steve arrives at Loki's cell with a bag of food in his hand. Loki is sitting in the only chair in the room reading a book. He looks up as the soldier approaches and watches silently as he unlocks the glass door and enters.

"Steve?" he questions at the change in routine.

The Captain secures the door behind himself then takes a seat on the bed. "The room we usually meet in is being used so I thought we could just talk here. Hope you don't mind."

Loki closes his book and looks pointedly at Steve, "I am a prisoner here, what I do and don't mind is hardly relevant."

The Captain can't stop from rolling his eyes, "says the man who showed up outside my quarters the other night. Now eat your breakfast," he says as he tosses the god a wrapped breakfast burrito from the bag.

"What do you wish to discuss today?" the god asks as he swallows the last bite of food.

"Can you sense other people, like in other rooms? Or maybe objects?"

The god tilts his head quizzically, "I'm not sure I follow."

Steve looks down at his hands where he is pulling at a piece of lint on the blanket. "This last mission, where I got hurt, we couldn't tell what we were walking into until we were inside and then we didn't know about the explosives until it was too late. There could have been hostages there. It would be good to be able to tell where people are inside a building or if there were bombs or something."

"Ah.... I see. Unfortunately no, I cannot do either of those things. My magic is limited to conjuring and some healing."

"Right, we talked about the conjuring before. I had just thought that maybe.....," he trails off and continues picking and the blanket.

"You want to avoid casualties and loss of life. Just another example of what makes you superior to most others."
Day 49

Steve is sitting on Loki’s bed again. His back is against the wall and his legs are stretched out in front of him. "You know, this bed isn't half bad. A lot better than I expected actually."

Loki smiles slyly, "when the damage was repaired to the cell after my little slip up, I took the opportunity to upgrade it."

"And how have the nightmares been? Are you sleeping better?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you are referring too."

"Really? Don't remember huh? Sleeping in my bed? Waking up with me at your bedside? None of that rings a bell?" Steve asks boldly.

"Hmmmmm...now that I think about it maybe some of that does sound vaguely familiar," the god chuckles.

"Right. So about the nightmares?"

"Not going to let this go are you?"

"Nope," is all Steve responds with a smile.

Loki looks towards the wall and takes a breath contemplating what to tell the captain. "It has been better as of late. When I find myself severely conflicted about things I tend to have nightmares, but I have resolved some of that now."

That piques Steve's interest, "conflicted about what?"

"Well that would be telling, now wouldn't it?"

"Ok fine, keep your secrets if you must," Steve tells the god.

Loki lets out a breath of relief that Steve is not going to press the issue. The last thing the god wants to do is admit that Steve himself has been the cause of his conflict.

Day 50

Steve has just returned from the gym when there is a knock on the door to his quarters. He opens the door half expecting to see Loki standing there and can't hide his disappointment when he sees Tony there instead.

When Steve doesn't say anything Tony puts a smile on his face, "Spangles! Haven't seen much of you lately, thought we could head down to the gym and test out some new equipment. What do ya think?"

Steve takes a moment to recover from the surprise before he speaks, "actually I just came back from
the gym and I was planning on meeting with Loki this afternoon," he explains.

Tony frowns at the mention of the gods name but recovers quickly, "you can still meet with him later, but we really should test some of this equipment before you get sent out again."

He doesn't like manipulating Steve, but he is worried about the amount of time he has been spending with the god and he knows playing to Steve's sense of duty will always work and this time is no exception as he watches the soldier sigh in resignation.

"Ok, I'll meet you in 10 minutes."

"Great! I think you'll really like what I've been working on."

As soon as Tony leaves Steve hurries to Loki's cell where he finds the god lounging on the bed. "I'm going to be doing some training this afternoon so I won't be back by until later this evening."

The god is disappointed but he knows that Steve will do anything to try and reduce casualties in the field, so he nods his understanding.

"I'll bring a pizza for dinner," Steve says with a smile as he walks away.

Hours later Steve is mopping sweat from his brow while Tony asks Jarvis to get the playback ready in a nearby conference room. "We can go over the data and eat dinner," he tells the soldier who immediately looks to the clock on the wall.

Tony keeps Steve busy reviewing the recordings of their training. While Steve admits the technology is impressive and he will be glad to have it on future missions he really just wants to wrap this up so he can go talk to Loki. Tony can see that Steve is getting anxious and so he begins to pull up the enemy casualty reports from the last mission. He really wants to keep Steve away from the god if possible. He has spoken to Natasha and they are both very worried about him.

An hour later there is a knock on the door and a young man pops his head in, “Captain Rogers? I was sent to remind you of your meeting with Director Fury at 8pm.”

Steve is confused because he didn’t have a meeting scheduled with the Director, but says nothing to the young man as he retreats, grateful for the excuse to leave. Instead he looks to Tony, “guess that means we are done for the day. Thank you for all this Tony. This is going to save lives.”

“Yeah, of course. I have some other ideas we can talk about in a few days.”

“I look forward to it," Steve responds as he gets up and walks out the door to head back to his room to get ready for his mystery meeting.

At 7:30 there is a knock on the door which Steve answers just as he is finishing buttoning his shirt. He is momentarily confused to see the young man from earlier standing there with a pizza box in his hand.

The man steps into the room without waiting to be invited in. Then he sets the pizza down on the small side table and turns back to Steve, “don’t just stand there Steve, shut the door.”

The soldier automatically does as he is told as a light travels over the body of the young man before him leaving Loki standing there. “I should have known,” he tells the god. “Where did you get the pizza?”

“Same place you get food; from the mess hall. There really is an impressive selection.”
“Yeah well, if you are going to expect this many people to stay on board for months at a time sometimes, you have to keep the food options good.”

Day 51

It’s early morning and Steve is sitting in Director Fury’s office. "Can't we just cut the pretense and give him a regular room? He has made it very clear that he can come and go as he pleases. He has chosen to stay and has caused no harm," Steve reasons.

"Other than the fact that half the infirmary staff think I have a crush on you," Fury snaps at Steve.

The Captain has to hold back a laugh knowing that will not help the situation any. "Look, I really feel like we can trust him and if not him then at least trust me."

"Fine. I'm making you personally responsible. And tell him no more impersonating me."

Steve grins and exits the director's office before he can change his mind.

Fury lifts his phone and makes the call to have Steve’s room moved to a less populated area of the helicarrier and to have Loki’s room set up next to his. He doesn’t like the idea of the god not being confined to his cell, but clearly the confinement is only at Loki’s will, so hopefully allowing this will keep him inclined to cooperate.

Day 52

Steve and Loki are in Steve’s room, packing up his meager possessions in preparation for moving to his new room. Loki having almost nothing, is ready to go. He is eager to have some semblance of privacy back, even if it is a false sense. Truth be told, he is pleased to be moving close to Steve.

The last item to be packed in the box is the soldiers sketch book. Loki picks it up off the shelf and hands it to Steve. He takes note of the way Steve tenses and then relaxes as soon as it is in his hands.

“Alright, I guess that’s everything,” Steve announces with one last look at the small room he has called home for almost 2 months. He picks up the box and leads Loki to the door and then out to the elevator. They descend to a much lower level. Steve gives his access code at the entrance to his new room. He sets the box down on the small bed and turns to Loki, who is standing in the doorway, “let’s take a look at your room,” he says as he moves to the hallway. His arm slightly brushes against the god’s cool skin. Although brief, it is enough to make his face burn.

He works the key pad on Loki’s door and makes sure to show him how to operate it, then opens the door and steps back to allow Loki to enter first. Steve doesn’t miss the slight crinkle of the gods nose as he looks around, “I know it’s not much. Maybe we can get you some books or something.”

“Not to worry Steve, this will do just fine,” he says with a wave of his hand. The walls are now no longer drab gray and are a deep shade of green, while the bed is covered in a thick blanket in black with green satin trim. There is a fur laid across the foot of the bed. A black leather head board completes the look.

“Neat trick,” Steve laughs.
Day 53

“I’m going to go get breakfast. I’ll be back soon,” Steve announces when Loki opens his door. The soldier is trying not to stare at the god who is wearing a simple green tunic and black pants. He looks so casual without his usual Asgardian leathers that he often chooses to wear.

“I would rather go with you if that can be arranged.”

When Steve doesn’t respond, Loki prompts, “Steve?”

“Oh, um, yeah. Wait. No, actually you can’t go with me. We are down here to keep you out of sight.”

Loki tries not to pout. “What if I changed my appearance? You know I can be anyone,” he says as a golden light travels over his body and Steve is left looking at The Black Widow.

“Ok, yeah, I guess that would be ok, but maybe go as someone not so recognizable?”

Loki nods and changes the illusion to that of a nondescript crew member. “That should work. Lets go.”

As they ride in the elevator Steve keeps glancing at Loki and then looking back to his feet or straight ahead. “What is the matter?” Loki finally asks.

“It’s just weird with you looking like that.”

“Ahhh, I see. Is this better? I can project the illusion to everyone, but you will see me as I am, like I did in the infirmary,” Loki responds as the same golden light from before travels over his body leaving Steve looking at the god in his usual form.

Steve grins at him, “much better.”

Day 54

Loki knocks on Steve's door and waits for the blonde to open it, "do you have time for lunch before your training?"

The Captain flashes a bright smile, "of course, just give me a minute to change."

Steve grabs a pair of jeans from his dresser and walks into the small bathroom leaving the door cracked open a couple of inches. He pulls his shirt over his head then removes his sleep pants and pulls on the jeans. "I was going to talk to Fury about allowing us up onto the deck. Might be nice to get some fresh air, take in the view," he calls out.

Loki tries to avert his gaze and not stare at the Captains body through the opening in the door, but the temptation is too great for him to resist. "yes, that would be nice," he mumbles as Steve opens the door and comes back into the room. He reaches into the closet and pulls out a button down shirt. When he turns back to the god, Loki pretends to examine the contents of a book shelf, causing Steve to smirk, triumphant that for once he was able fluster the god instead of the other way around.

Day 55
They are once again heading to the mess hall for food. Steve notices men staring at Loki as they pass. "Who are you today," he asks knowing the god has been using different images when they go in public.

"Today I am a tall well built blonde whose uniform is a touch too tight but shows just the right amount of cleavage," the god laughs.

Steve grins at him, "can you let me see?"

Immediately Steve sees a stunning blonde woman standing before him. She has long eyelashes and lovely blue eyes. Her body is toned but also curvy and the top 2 buttons of her uniform blouse are undone to show a hint of cleavage. Her skirt is just a bit too short to be regulation but manages to show off her impressive long legs. "Wow. Who did you base this one off of?"

Loki gives him an evil grin that looks out of place on the blondes face. "Can't you tell? This is you."

"Me?"

"If you were a woman of course," the god corrects. "And it seems that you would be quite popular with the men and even some of the women, based on all the looks we're getting."

Just then another soldier walks past. Steve observes as the other man's eyes linger just a little too long on Loki. Steve tugs on his arm so they can continue on to their destination. "Ok that's enough. Next time maybe be someone a little less …um…that," he laughs as he gestures to the gods body.

Chapter End Notes

Today has been a particularly crappy day, but a little Steve and Loki being flirty and cute helps a little.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Loki gets upset with Steve.

Chapter 12

In your room

Halestorm

Let me in your room
I've seen the rest of you
But I know there's something more in your room
I'm right outside your door
Show me things you've never shown before

A few pictures from your past
And those walls you painted black
And the secrets that you keep under your bed
All you have to do, is let me in your room

You can be yourself
You don't have to hide from me I won't tell
I know everyone you've ever trusted has let you down
And you don't want to come out
And show me, show me

You know every part of me
I let you in, I let you see
All the dark and every color of my room
Let me do that for you
And tell me all about your past
Why you painted those walls black
Baby it's all right you're safe in here with me
Open up so I can see

Day 56

Steve returns to his room to find Loki sitting on his bed, "are they really sending you on another mission so soon? You've barely recovered from the last one!"

The anger in Loki's voice startles him, "how did you even know I was being sent out?"
"Magic Steve. I watched the video feed of your meeting from the security office," Loki huffs.

"Good to know," Steve tells him, filing that information away for later as he begins to pull out his gear.

Loki reaches over and grabs the uniform pants out of Steve's hands before he can do anything else. "They cannot possibly expect you to go out again so soon. Do they not care about your wellbeing?"

Steve sighs as he turns and sits next to the god on the bed. "It's my job Loki. It's what I was made for."

"That doesn't give them the right to put you in danger at their whim Steve. What if next time you are hurt worse? Or even killed? What then?"

"That's the risk of being a soldier. Are you going to tell me that warriors on Asgard aren't faced with the same situation?"

"Of course they are. They get injured, they die."

"Then how is this different Loki? Besides it's not like there is anyone to mourn me if I did die. I'm alone."

"Is that what you think? That no one will mourn you?"

Steve twists his hands in his lap and refuses to meet Loki's gaze. "What do you want me to say? I don't have anything else. Did you know I've been on this helicarrier for almost 2 months and there is no one to even realize I'm not at my apartment in Brooklyn. No one to check on me-"

"You're a fool," Loki spits out.

"Why? Tell me exactly why I am wrong? Why am I a fool?"

"Because you are. If you can't see it then I can't help you," Loki answers angrily as he stands and heads to the door.

Steve watches the god open the door and cannot hold back his anger, "no of course you can't. I'm supposed to be helping you, remember. You're no different than the rest of them."

Loki opens and closes his mouth a few times as he tries to formulate a response, then he just turns and leaves the room quietly shutting the door behind himself.

Day 57

Steve is standing outside of Loki's room. He is hesitant to knock on the door after the argument they had. And he knows that once Loki see's his current condition the god will not be any happier. The blonde knows he can't put it off much longer so he knocks lightly on the door and is surprised when it is immediately jerked open.

Loki stands in the door way wearing a thin pair of sleep pants and a plain black t shirt. His eyes narrow as he takes in the bruising on Steve’s cheek, the split lip and the way he is holding his right
arm close to his body. He steps back and allows Steve to limp into his room and sit on the bed.

"Look, Loki about yesterday-"

Loki cuts Steve off with a stern look then turns toward the night stand next to the bed and gestures towards the couple of items sitting on it, "It has occurred to me that you haven't really been in this room since we came down here. I took the opportunity of the free time I had and went to retrieve some personal items. There is little that I treasure in the world, but those few things that I deem worthy, I like to keep close."

The Captain reaches out and picks up a small intricately carved wooden box. Loki takes it and gently turns Steve's hand so the box is sitting on top of the blonde's palm. The god then waves his hand over it causing it to split open along the center of the top. An image of a large tree appears and soft music begins to play from within. "Yggdrasil, the tree of life. All the realms are connected through the branches of the great tree. My mother gave this to me when I was very young and I have safeguarded it since then."

"It's beautiful."

Loki takes the box from Steve and sets it back on the table where it closes again then he picks up a leather bound book, "this journal is filled with information on the healing arts. I began to study healing when it became apparent that Thor would forever be running head long into battles without a thought as to his own safety. As you can imagine, I became somewhat skilled," Loki says with a wistful smile. "Captain, if you desire it, I can work on healing your wounds."

"Captain? You haven't called me that in a while." When Loki frowns at him, he quickly adds, "uh, yeah, if you can heal me, that would be great."

"As you wish," Loki responds as he moves his hands to hover just over Steve's left ankle. He can feel a slight tingle just as Loki moves his hands up and repeats the process at his shoulder. When the god moves to his cheek, he places his cool hand directly on Steve's skin, but closes his eyes. Steve keeps his eyes locked on Loki's features taking in the sight of the man before him. All too soon, Loki moves his hand away and opens his eyes to quickly inspect his work, "I think that will suffice. You should probably rest now," he says as he stands and opens the door to indicate that Steve should leave.

"Yeah, ok. Thank you Loki."

Day 58

The Captain is leading the Avengers through a rubble strewn street. It is eerily quiet, as though the city has been abandoned. Loki is crouched behind a low wall watching as Steve leads his team in a building by building search. He is so focused on watching the blonde that he is startled when Hawkeye rounds a corner and takes aim at him with his bow. Steve sees what Hawkeye is about to do and lunges in front of Loki to shield him from the arrow, but Loki's reflexes are fast and he grabs the arrow from the air just before it pierces Steve's uniform. The Captain looks at Loki with a smile mixed with relief and gratitude, but before either man can say anything the tip of the arrow explodes and Steve collapses onto the sidewalk in a heap. As Loki drops to his knees, he turns Steve to face him and can see the large ragged hole in his chest.

Loki gasps as he wakes from the nightmare. He sits up and pulls his knees to his chest not wanting to think about his dream. After a few minutes he rises. He has to reassure himself.
Steve is lounging on his bed when there is a brief knock and Loki opens the door. He doesn’t say anything, just moves into the room and sits beside Steve in the only chair in the room. “Explain to me why you are always so ready to sacrifice yourself,” the god requests after a few moments.

“Excuse me?” Steve nearly chokes.

Loki turns his entire body to face the Captain. “You seem to have a habit of throwing yourself in front of danger, literally throwing yourself on a grenade to protect those you hardly knew in boot camp. Single handedly taking on a Hydra base, sacrificing yourself to the ice. Do you remember how we first met in Stuttgart….. Need I continue? Why do you value yourself so little?”

With a barely suppressed sigh Steve looks at his hands in his lap, studying his fingers. Finally he answers, “its not that I don’t value myself.” He pauses, measuring what he wants to say. “I put myself in danger because I have the ability to make a difference. Before,” he gestures to his body, “I tried, but was too weak to do anything other than get myself in trouble.”

“And yet you continued to do so,” Loki interrupts, the tone of his voice making it clear what he thinks about that. “You run headlong into danger with nary a thought as to your safety and nothing to protect you.”

“I have my shield,” Steve replies, his voice tense with agitation.

“Where is your shield now Captain? Here you sit, knowingly putting yourself in danger, just to get some information for your superiors. They would lead you like a lamb to slaughter if it suited their purpose and you willingly volunteer.” Loki is up in a flash with his hand wrapped around Steve’s throat. “I could kill you in an instant, could have at any time. So I ask you one more time, why?”

Loki squeezes the hand around Steve’s neck to emphasize his point. When Steve begins to turn red and cough Loki jerks back from him holding his hand up to his chest.

Steve looks directly at the god. His head is spinning and not just from the lack of oxygen. “I do it for what is right. For what I believe in. For what I care about.”

“Seems quite wasteful if you ask me.”

“Why do you care?” Steve spits out, his voice hoarse as he rubs his throat. He is in shock, having Loki lash out at him.

“Captain, I have been described as a great many things, but you are the only one to try to label me as caring. I would venture to say that is a foolish idea at best.”

“Liar,” Steve croaks out.

“Ah, now that one I know, but lying is the last resort of cowards and desperate men. I like to believe that I am neither of those things.”

Steve’s stomach sinks as he thinks about what a fool he has been. It isn’t until this moment that Steve acknowledges that he desperately wanted Loki to say he cared about him. He actually thought that maybe the god did. He finally realizes that he had been holding out hope that there could be something between them. The weight of Loki’s words are almost too much to bear. He works to keep his expression neutral even as his heart is hammering in his chest and he can hear his blood rushing in his ears. He feels faint and vaguely nauseous. “I think we’re done,” he manages as he stands and opens the door, indicating that he wants Loki to leave.

The god simply inclines his head and steps out into the hallway. He pauses and spins on his heel to face Steve, mouth open, but not sure what he wants to say. He realizes that he is a moment too late as
he watches Steve slam the door closed.

Later that night, Steve plays the conversation over in his head as he absentmindedly rubs his sore throat where purple bruises in the shape of Loki’s fingers are visible. He feels like such a fool to have allowed this to happen. He should have put a stop to it from the first day and yet he didn’t. He allowed himself to be pulled along into Loki’s game. No, that isn’t exactly right, he jumped head first into Loki’s game, foolishly walking right into his trap and locking himself in.

“Why do you care?”

“Captain I have been described as a great many things, but you are the only one to try and label me as caring....”

Steve sits up in bed........he runs over the conversation again and again.

“Lying is the last resort of cowards and desperate men. I like to believe that I am neither of those things......”

Loki never actually said he didn’t care.......Did he?

Hours after Steve has fallen asleep, Loki appears at his bedside. He allows himself a moment to watch the blonde man sleeping. Then reaches out and gently caresses Steve’s bruised neck while his hand glows a soft green. Satisfied that he has healed any damage, he lets his eyes linger over the soldier and then disappears back to his own room.

Steve opens his eyes when he is certain Loki has left, having woken up to the first soft touch upon his skin.

Day 59

Steve steps out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist having just showered. He stops short when he sees Loki standing in the doorway and his hand immediately goes to his neck.

"I am sorry Steve, I knocked but there was no answer," Loki stammers trying not to look at the soldier’s body.

"Is there something you wanted Loki?"

"Yes actually. I came to give you this," the god answers as he lifts a bag from where it had been sitting at his feet. "I wish to apologize for my behavior yesterday," he continues as Steve takes the bag and looks inside.

He sits on the bed and pulls out a framed picture of a middle aged woman, another photo of himself and his friend Bucky Barnes and a small compass. He looks at the picture with his best friend and gently sets it down on the side table. "You thought to apologize by breaking into my apartment?"

"Clearly I am not accustomed to admitting wrongdoing," Loki says with a small shrug as the corner of his mouth quirks up.

Picking up the compass, Steve carefully opens it and tries not to tear up as he looks at the picture
inside. “I had this with me when I went in the ice. Fury made sure I got it back after…….” He closes
the compass and sets it next to Bucky’s picture before he begins to lovingly run his fingers over the
image of his mother. This picture also goes on the night stand. Steve draws in a breath and then
turns back to the god.

"I also brought this if it helps," he tells Steve as he hands him the grease stained paper sack he had
been holding in his hand. "I hope these are the correct sandwiches, the amount of delis in New York
is really quite ridiculous."

Steve grabs the bag from the god's hand and opens the top to inhale the scent, "these are perfect." He
stands and moves to the dresser, "thank you Loki. Let me get dressed and we can eat."

"Steve, I did not do this for thanks. I meant to ask for forgiveness by bringing you some familiar
items, but apparently I miss stepped again by entering your residence without permission."

Steve turns back to Loki with his clothes in his hand, "it's ok, really, I'm sure SHIELD has already
been over everything in there a dozen times."

"Still, I should have thought about how my actions would be received."

"Well I accept your apology, on both accounts."
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

It all comes to a head and everything changes for Steve and Loki.

Chapter 13

The Red
Chevelle

They say freak,
When you’re singled out,
The red,
Well it filters through.
So lay down,
The threat is real,
When his sight,
Goes red again.
Seeing red again,
Seeing red again.
This change,
He won’t contain,
Slip away,
To clear your mind,
When asked,
Who made it show (who made it show),
The truth,
He gives into most.
So lay down,
The threat is real,
When his sight,
Goes red again.
Seeing red again!
They say freak, when you’re singled out,
The red, it filters through.

Day 60

"Fury ok’d us going up on deck today," Steve announces when Loki opens his door. Then he breezes past the god and drops down onto the bed looking expectantly at him.

Loki looks at Steve lounging on the bed and tries to fight down the swell of arousal that he feels. The blonde is dressed simply in jeans and a grey long sleeve shirt with the sleeves pushed up to his elbows. His feet hang over the side of the bed to keep his sneakers off the blankets and his hands are clasped behind his head.
"You wish to go now?" Loki asks.

"Unless you have somewhere else to be?" Steve replies with a grin.

"If it will get you to stop musing up my bed, I will gladly go now," Loki remarks off handedly.

Steve jumps to his feet and walks past the god out into the hallway, "I would've thought you'd be happy to have me musing up your bed."

Day 61

Steve is walking with Loki on the deck of the helicarrier. Loki stands next to the edge and leans slightly forward looking down at the open air. “Can you step back?”

“Why? Does it make you nervous? Would you mourn me if I fell?”

“Yes I would. So stop ok? Just stop.”

Loki looks to the Captain, “sometimes we can’t stop ourselves from falling.”

“Yes you can Loki, just step back from the edge. Please.”

Loki looks back over the edge again, “we all fall Steve. How far and how fast is all that varies.”

Steve has the distinct feeling Loki isn’t talking about falling from the deck, “It doesn’t have to be that way.”

“And if I did fall, what would you do Steve?”

“I would catch you.”

Loki blinks at the Captain, but steps back from the edge and heads back below deck.

Later they are sitting in Steve’s room. “I can show you how I fell before,” Loki tells Steve quietly. Steve is surprised. Loki has not been willing to discuss what happened to him up until now. “You don’t have to if its too hard.”

“Steve, everything has been hard since placing myself in your presence.”

The Captain doesn’t respond other than to nod. Loki takes this as consent and so he moves closer to Steve and places his hands on either side of his head as he did months before. Steve closes his eyes and tries to focus on the images in his mind and not on the sensation of Loki’s hands on his skin.

When Loki withdraws Steve sits and stares at the floor. He uses the back of his hand to dash away the tears on his cheeks. Loki stands to leave and Steve jumps to his feet as well, “where are you going?”

“It’s late and if we plan on watching the decent tomorrow we should both try to sleep.”

“I’m not sure I’ll be able to sleep after that. Do you want to stay here with me? Or we can go to your room if you prefer. We don’t have to talk.” Steve already knows that Loki’s nightmares are eased
when he is close and he hopes Loki’s presence in turn, will lesson any he may have as a result of what the god has shown him.

Loki swallows hard, “here is fine, let me just get a blanket,” he states as he glances at the chair next to the bed.

Steve takes a breath and pushes forward, “can’t you just, I don’t know, make the bed bigger so there is room for the both of us?”

“You wish to sleep with me Steve?” Loki smirks trying to lighten the mood.

The Captain can feel the blush spreading across his cheeks and down his neck, but fights the urge to look away, he does, however, cover his eyes with his hand before sighing, “yes Loki, I want to sleep with you.”

Day 62

Loki and Steve are on the deck watching as the helicarrier descends to the hidden hanger beneath the lake. They are both purposefully avoiding thinking about how they woke up with Steve’s chest pressed against Loki’s back.

Clint walks up to them, “Cap,” he greets before turning to the god, “Loki, I see you are masquerading as a maintenance worker today. Must be nice to be able to walk around out here. No consequences for what you’ve done,” Clint remarks casually.

Both men are wary of the archer’s intentions as he continues to voice his disapproval of the god being on the helicarrier. When Barton pauses, Loki takes the opportunity to address him, “Agent Barton, my offer to help with any after affects from my misuse of the scepter is still open.” Loki reaches out a hand towards the archer.

Clint reacts by lunging forward, “don’t touch me,” he growls as he pulls out the magic binders and latches them on Loki’s wrists.

“What have you done?” Loki asks as he looks to Steve with fear in his eyes. He knows he can’t use his magic to mask his presence. He will be found out.

“Clint! Get those off of him!” Steve shouts.

“No way Cap. I’m not letting him get in my head again.”

“He’s not going to get in your head, he doesn’t have the scepter. He hasn’t done anything since he’s been here.”

“He’s in your head. Didn’t need the scepter for that did he? He’s a murderer. Its not ok just because the two of you are….whatever you are, which is disgusting by the way!”

Steve’s face contorts in shock and then anger at Clint’s words, “what exactly do you think is going on here?”

Clint chuckles humorously, “oh we all know what’s going on. You think we don’t see it, but we do. He’s got his hooks in you.”

Loki has said nothing during this. He is focused on trying to find a way to get the cuffs off before his
rising panic overtakes all reason.

Before any of them can do anything else there is a crash of thunder and in a flash of light, Thor stands before them.

“Loki, what is the meaning of this?” He bellows as he raises his hammer and grabs his brother around the neck with his other hand.

“Thor! Let him go!” Steve yells.

“Captain, he is dangerous, best to leave this matter between my brother and I.”

Loki reaches his shackled hands up and grips Thor’s wrist, trying to pull the blondes hand from around his throat.

Steve also grabs Thor’s arm and pulls him back from Loki, “get the binders off of him.”

“He is dangerous,” Thor repeats, but he is concerned by the way Loki is scanning the sky all around.

“He’s not dangerous. At least not to us. You need to take the binders off now.”

“Its too late,” Loki tells them as he watches the sky.

Steve and Thor follow his gaze up, where they see a portal opening up in the sky above. Within moments, dozens of armored warriors on sleds stream through and head straight for the helicarrier.

“Clint, secure the deck, get everyone below. Thor, the binders, now!” Steve orders taking charge of the situation.

Thor pulls a key from the pouch at his waist and unlocks Loki’s hands. “I need my shield,” he tells the god who nods and quickly disappears. He reappears wearing his leathers and armor and hands the shield to Steve. As soon as Steve takes it, his clothes are transformed into his uniform. Before he can say anything there is an explosion only a few feet away. All 3 men flinch back, “Thor, you cover the air, try to keep anymore from coming through.”

“The portal is unstable and already collapsing,” Loki observes as he pulls Steve and Thor to cover.

“Rogers! What’s going on?” Director Fury yells from where he crouched behind some storage lockers as soon as he came on deck.

“We’re under attack, never seen these before.”

“It’s the Chitauri,” Loki hisses as he sends a blast of magic at the nearest creature.

“I’ll get Tony up here to give you support, you and Loki handle the ones on the deck,” Fury calls to Steve as he takes aim and shoots another of the Chitauri.

Turning to Loki, Steve says, “stay near me.”

“Captain this is my fight, they are here for me. Get to safety, I assure you I can handle this.”

“Not a chance Loki,” Steve tells him making it very clear that his decision is final.

The god dips his head slightly to defer to the soldier, “yes Captain. I will follow your lead.”

Thor watches the exchange then begins to twirl his hammer and rises up into the sky.
Iron man flies up from the side of the helicarrier and joins the fray. One of the Chitauri sleds crashes into the deck and the rider is immediately up and charging at Steve and Loki. The Captain leaps in front of Loki and lets his shield fly catching the creature in the stomach. It drops to the deck as Steve runs up, grabs his shield and brings it down on its neck in a killing blow.

When he turns back Loki is surrounded by 3 Chitauri. The largest one swings a staff at the gods head. Loki pivots and ducks out of the way, but cannot block the blow to his back from one of the others. He braces his legs and turns his head to the offending creature, then he shifts his body and sends a pulse of magic that drops the Chitauri to the ground.

A riderless sled crashes a few feet from Steve and he ducks to avoid the resulting debris from where it explodes. This momentary distraction is enough to allow another creature to jam its staff into Steve’s gut. The Captain has just enough time to register the flash of white agony before Loki leaps to his side swinging one of the Chitauri spears hard enough to break the neck of Steve’s assailant. He turns and presses a hand to the open wound, but before he can work on healing it, he feels the tendrils of another magic user reaching out. He instantly recognizes the unique tinge and with a quick look to Steve, who nods, he spins to face the source.

It takes Loki a moment to pinpoint Malekith’s location behind one the large jets on the deck. The god stalks towards the dark elf, but only makes it a few steps before another of the Chitauri sleds is bearing down on him. Loki dodges the blasts from the front cannons as he hears Malekith yell out, “take him alive!”

Malekith sends a blast of dark magic at Loki who puts up a shield deflecting the energy back to the source where it impacts against the jet he is behind. Malekith is unscathed, but the jet takes heavy damage. The dark elf braces and sends another blast of magic towards Loki, but Steve is there blocking it with his shield. The force knocks him back and he lands heavily on his injured side, but he struggles back to his feet.

“Loki!” Steve calls as he throws his shield. The god moves to avoid the hurtling disc as it deflects off the damaged jet to the right then hits another Chitauri sled. The sled crashes into the jet and comes to rest in a heap of tangled metal. Steve’s shield lands in front of Loki, who picks it up and steps towards the soldier.

The Captain doesn’t know that the damaged jet is leaking fuel on the helicarrier deck. He also doesn’t expect that the damage done to the sled left it’s circuitry exposed and vulnerable. The small fire that starts is not too concerning though and when Loki steps up to hand him his shield back, he has only a moment to turn back towards the mess when Loki’s eyes widen in fear. He doesn’t have time to register Loki shifting his body to try and shield him, only to duck his head down as the explosion engulfs him in heat and debris. Then they are falling.

Loki looks up through the hole in the deck above him. He is splayed out on the floor. Below him is the body of Steve Rogers. For the briefest of moments Loki feels a twinge of fear when he takes in the sight of the Captain. His face is scratched, the left side is already swelling and bruising. part of his uniform is burned away exposing the charred flesh beneath, across his chest, right arm and hand, but what is worse is the unnatural way his left leg is bent away from his body.

Loki can see that Steve is still breathing. The overwhelming sense of relief is short lived when he hears the creaking and groaning of metal above him. He gathers his magic around them and tries to shield them from the steel and glass that crashes down. He is only partially successful in deflecting the onslaught. Loki feels the blunt force of a steel beam striking a glancing blow to his side and grunts with pain as he tries to cover Steve with his own body.
“Brother?” he hears Thor call to him. Loki peers up through the gaping hole above him and sees Thor staring down, his features drawn with worry.

"Hold on brother. I will come to you,” he begins as there is a loud rumble beneath Loki. The raven haired man looks up at Thor with an expression of horror on his face as he feels everything shift beneath him and then they are falling again. Loki frantically pulls at Steve’s body, trying to twist them around in mid air. When his back hits the water below, it is with such force that he loses his grip on the Captain’s still form. Loki watches, frozen, as Steve’s body sinks below the surface.

A scream tears from his lips as he dives and grabs the Captain around the shoulders and wills them both to the surface.

“Hold on Steve. Hold on,” he pleads. Above he can see the helicarrier. Flames licking at it from the gaping hole near the edge that Loki and Steve fell through. He looks back at Steve and is alarmed to see his lips a frightening shade of blue. There is blood mixing with the water in his hair from a large gash on the side of his head and he can see more bruises on his face. The freezing water is already starting to leach feeling from his body, which is mostly immune to cold, so he knows the Captain has little time if he remains in the water much longer. He gathers what little energy he has left, squeezes his eyes shut and concentrates on getting Steve to safety.

Loki’s eyes snap open when he feels the hard stone floor beneath his knees and practically heaves a sob of relief, but that feeling is short lived when he looks at the man cradled in his arms. The bruising and swelling on Steve’s face is getting worse and the wound on his head is bleeding freer now. His lips are blue and Loki realizes Steve is not breathing.

“No, no, no,” Loki murmurs as he lays Steve on the ground and begins to frantically push on his stomach and chest trying to get any water out. A small amount trickles from the side of the blondes mouth as Loki feels at his neck for as pulse. He finds nothing and quickly leans in to attempt to breathe air back into his lungs. He checks again for any sign of a heartbeat, “Steve….. don’t do this. Not now.”

Once again he tries to force water out of Steve’s lungs. This time more runs out of his slack mouth. Encouraged, Loki leans in and pushes his breath and magic into Steve’s lungs. He is rewarded with a gasp and sputtering and he quickly turns the Captain on his side where he vomits a large amount of liquid. Although his lips are not so blue, Loki can see that he is not actually conscious and Steve’s body is beginning to shake. Whether from the cold or his injuries the god is not sure.

With a flick of his wrist a fire crackles to life in the hearth behind him. Then he begins trying to rid the Captain of his wet clothes. He starts to work the clasps on his uniform with shaking fingers and tries to work his arms out of the sleeves but quickly gives up, realizing he is likely to cause further injury. Instead, he retrieves a knife and simply cuts the garments from the prone man's body.

Now that Steve is laid bare before him he can finally take stock of his injuries. He hardly knows where to start. The gash in Steve’s head is jarring as are the bruises and swelling on his face, but more worrisome is the reddish discoloration on his abdomen and the stab wound from the Chitauri spear. His wrist is broken as are both of his legs.

Loki knows he needs to move Steve. Get him off the floor where the cold stone can continue to steal his body heat, so he carefully gathers him in his arms and gently places him on the bed. Loki steels himself for what he must do. Although his magic is drained from the battle and bringing Steve here, he gathers what he can and begins to slowly run his hands down Steve’s body starting at his head and working to his ankles, cataloging each injury as he goes. Trying to decide where to focus his
attention first.

He places both hands on Steve’s abdomen and visualizes the damage within. Willing his magic to repair the lacerated liver, the spleen and the myriad other parts that all seem to be trying to spill Steve’s blood from his very core.

When he finally is satisfied with that he moves back to Steve’s head to work on the large gash. He can sense the skull fracture beneath the swelling. Oh so carefully he works to reduce the swelling and encourage the bone and skin to knit back together. The process is painstaking and hours pass like minutes while Loki works to stabilize the worst of Steve’s injuries.
Chapter 14

Chapter 14
Time of Dying
Three Days Grace

On the ground I lay
Motionless in pain
I can see my life flashing before my eyes
Did I fall asleep
Is this all a dream?
Wake me up
I'm living a nightmare
I will not die (I will not die)
I will survive
I will not die I'll wait here for you
I feel alive when you're beside me
I will not die I'll wait here for you
In my time of dying
On this bed I lay
Losing everything
I can see my life passing me by
Was it all too much
Or just not enough?
Wake me up
I'm living a nightmare
I will not die (I will not die)
I will survive
I will not die I'll wait here for you
I feel alive when you're beside me
I will not die; I'll wait here for you

Day 63

“We were lucky the helicarrier was almost docked before the Chitauri attacked. This could have been much worse,” Agent Coulson remarks as he and Director Fury survey images of the damage.

“I’m not sure lucky is the optimum word,” Fury responds with a frown. “We lost some good agents and Captain Rogers and Loki are missing.”

The directors office door flies open and Thor storms in unannounced. "How long?"

Fury only gazes calmly up at the god. "Have a seat."

"Barton has told me that Loki has been here for weeks. Is this true?” Thor demands.

"Have. A. Seat." Fury reiterates and waits until the blonde sits down. "Loki turned himself in to Shield custody shortly after the battle at Stuttgart. He has been here ever since."
"You kept this knowledge from me," Thor states.

"The same way you didn't tell us about the scepter right away." Thor frowns but doesn't respond. "I'll level with you. Loki has taken a special interest in Captain Rogers. I can't say why, but he has been cooperating with us since his arrival."

"And you saw fit to hide him? His actions on Asgard must still be answered for. And here on Midgard? What of that?"

"Shield has not turned a blind eye to Loki's crimes," the director holds up a hand to silence Thor as he opens his mouth to argue. "However, sometimes we have to look at the larger picture."

Thor pauses then looks down at his hands, "when Loki was lost to the void, I thought him dead. The destruction he caused at your Shield base was most grievous. The Allfather-"

"Let me show you something," Fury cuts him off as he pulls up copies of the recordings of Loki's first weeks meeting with Steve and later recordings from various locations on the helicarrier where Steve and Loki spent time. Thor watches the interactions between the men in silence until Fury asks, "Do you have any idea where Loki may have taken Captain Rogers?"

"I do not," the blonde god answers.

"But...." Fury leads sensing there is something else.

"I do not believe Loki intends to hurt the Captain. My brother is complicated, but he was never cruel. I know not what his intentions are, but these images and what I saw with my own eyes just before he vanished, give me hope."

Fury stands and gestures for Thor and Agent Coulson to follow him out.

A low groan pulls Loki out of an exhaustion induced sleep. He quickly sits up from the chair he had pulled next to the bed. His intention having been only to rest a few moments before starting to work on Steve’s multiple broken bones.

The groan comes again followed by a whimper as Steve furrows his brow. Loki examines his features carefully then places a hand on Steve’s forehead searching for any damage to his head that may have been missed. Finding nothing especially concerning that time won’t heal, he moves to repeat the process on his abdomen before finally shifting his attention to the soldiers legs. Loki takes a breath and begins working the thigh bone on his left leg. Shifting it subtly, easing it back into alignment before moving to the next spot to begin the process anew.

Every so often Steve whimpers in his sleep. He is plunging into the water.... no! Not again! Please no! Not this......his thoughts are cut short as he feels the water filling his lungs again. Cold. He is so cold.

Day 64

Tony Stark does not like puzzles that he cannot solve and this one is driving him mad. He cannot figure out where Loki and Steve disappeared to and Director Fury doesn't seem overly concerned. Of course its hard to tell, since the man is hard to read.
"I haven't been able to figure out how to track Loki's magic. Yet. Banner is helping me set up some scans for gamma rays and energy fluctuations. We'll figure out what that bastard did to Cap and get him back."

Director Fury just stares noncommittally at Tony until the billionaire gets frustrated and walks out.

Steve slowly becomes aware of a feeling of light pressure on his body. Not unpleasant. In fact, he feels comfortable. Warm. Safe. That is until he tries to shift his body. He cannot help the howl of pain that is ripped from his throat. He tries again to shift, this time able to stifle the sound down to a pained hiss.

He starts to open his eyes, but it hurts. A lot. He tries again to open his eyes and finds he can only crack one open. He tries to scan his surroundings but his vision goes dark once again.

Day 65

Loki's head hurts. It takes so much effort to coax the Captains body into healing itself. He shifts on the bed and tells himself he is only embracing Steve to check his heartbeat, but he is so very tired and his head hurts so much.

It is later that Steve is aware enough to try to open his eyes again. This time he is able to focus enough to take in some of his surroundings. He is laying on a bed in what looks like a small cabin. The room is dark, but there is just enough moon light coming through the window that he can see a large chair near a stone fireplace, a small wooden table with 2 chairs on either side, a tall wardrobe and the large bed he is laying in. It is only now that he becomes aware of the weight pressed against the side of his body. He looks down his body and see's a mass of black hair and tries to pull himself into a sitting position. The intense pain that blossoms across his chest causes him to fall back on the bed. “Loki.....”

The Captain opens his eyes for the third time. Loki has shifted his body and his face is turned towards Steve’s. “Loki.......”

The captain lays his head back against the bed and tries to assess his injuries. He can feel a shooting pain in his wrist, his stomach feels tender, he can feel the ache and irritation of what is probably a large burn running across his body. It hurts when he inhales and so he suspects a few broken ribs. When he attempts to shift his legs under the blanket covering him he throws his head back and hisses with pain. Something is definitely wrong, but he cannot see his legs under the blanket and with Loki laying on it he cannot move it and so he has no idea of the extent of the damage.

Day 66

“Loki.... Loki!” Steve calls the man's name and uses his good arm to gently jostle the gods shoulder. Loki wakes with a start and looks directly into those big blue eyes. For just a moment he forgets where he is. His mind tricks him into thinking he is laying wrapped in the super soldiers strong arms, safe and happy. Steve’s pained utterance of his name is what brings him back into focus. He quickly
sits up pulling away from the Captain.

Loki's first instinct is to ask Steve if he is alright, but obviously he is not, so he keeps his mouth shut trying to figure out what he should say. Finally it is Steve who breaks the silence. "Where are we?"

*Ever the practical one,* Loki thinks, but out loud he says, "this is my home."

Steve takes another look around the small room and has a hard time believing that this humble cabin is Loki's home. The god can see the disbelief on the Captain's face. "You do not have to believe me, but I speak the truth. This place is known to no other. It is my private oasis."

After a moment Steve’s features soften and he gives a small nod to indicate that he will accept that answer. Besides, what other choice does he have?

"Can you sit up?"

"I think so," Steve replies and then reaches his good hand out for Loki to help pull him up. His grip is tight but has little strength to help Loki get him to a seated position. He is immediately winded as he tries to pull in air past his broken ribs.

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**Day 67**

The dark elf Malekith uses his magic to hide from prying eyes. He sneaks around the helicarrier trying to get information on where Loki is hiding. Unless he can get information here, he will have to hope Loki drops his shielding again as he did before. It was in that brief moment that the dark elf had been able to sense the god and gather enough dark magic to open the portal in the sky above the helicarrier.

“I will be returning to Asgard to inform the all father of what has happened and to ask Heimdall to begin searching for any signs of my brother or Captain Rogers.”

Director Fury glances at Thor before returning his gaze to the screen of his computer. “Do you think Heimdall will be able to see him? After all, he couldn’t see him before.”

“If Loki is shielding himself with his magic, I have little hope that Heimdall will be able to find him, but I have to try.”

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**Day 68**

The Captain is sitting up on the bed with a bowl of broth in his hands, "How were the Chitauri able to get here? To the helicarrier I mean," Steve amends as he allows the warm liquid to cool.

Loki looks away and moves to stand by the window before he answers, "I was not the only one Thanos was training. I don't know if I should be pleased or disgusted that I was deemed the strongest. Most did not survive the conditioning, but there was one other. He wields dark magic. I know not how he came into Thanos' grasp, but he was there before I. It was Malekith who attempted to steal the scepter from Odin’s vault." Loki turns back around and looks at Steve. "Dark magic can be used as a means to travel between the realms, but it is unstable and dangerous for the user. This is why there were so few who attacked."
"What were they after? With the scepter on Asgard it doesn't make sense to attack the helicarrier. Unless they were after the tesseract."

"The fact that he made no move for it tells me that was not their goal. I am not sure he even knows of its location."

Take him alive!

"He failed to get the scepter before because of the protections I placed on it-"

"He was after you!" Steve interrupts. "He needs you to remove the spell."

"I believe that to be the case," Loki answers.

"So as long as you stay hidden with your magic you should be safe," the captain reasons.

Day 69

Loki takes a last look at the man sleeping in his bed. He resists the urge to touch him, afraid that he will not be able to stop. He appreciates that Steve insisted they share the overly large bed, but it is difficult to be so close to the Captain each night even though he sleeps practically hanging off his side of the bed. He reluctantly gets out of bed and dresses. The god lingers another moment and then gets up to open the way to Yggdrasil. He can only hope to return before Steve awakens.

Loki steps out into the Queen's garden. As he had hoped, she is sitting on the bench in her favorite spot. He takes a moment to let his emotions wash over him. The great love he holds for his mother, despite his anger for the deceit surrounding his true parentage, his affection for her has never diminished.

"Loki, it is rude to stand there gaping," the queen chastises without turning towards him.

Loki smiles to himself, of course she already knew he was there. He approaches her as she stands and pulls him into a warm embrace. "My son. I knew you would come back."

He breathes in her unique scent, rose petals and fresh rain and it brings him comfort as when he was a boy. Unfortunately, he cannot afford to indulge himself any longer and he breaks the embrace.

"Mother, I have come with an urgent task to ask of you. The Titan Thanos seeks the stones. The tesseract is on Midgard with an organization called Shield. Send Thor to retrieve it. It must be safe guarded. I fear Thanos will learn of its location and make an attempt for it as he did the scepter."

Frigga nods her understanding, "it will be done Loki."

"Thank you mother. I cannot stay longer, though I wish I had more time...." Loki trails off unsure of what else to say.

With a soft smile Frigga reaches up and cups his cheek. "My Loki, what is so urgent that you cannot spend a moment longer with your mother."

Loki wants to stay. He misses her desperately but he knows Steve may wake at any time. Frigga can see the resignation on her son's face. "We will speak again, when I have more time. I promise," he tells her as he stands to leave.
Day 70

Director Fury has just taken a seat at his desk when Frigga, Queen of Asgard appears. “Director,” she greets.

“Ma’am. What can I help you with?”

“My son has asked me to retrieve the tesseract from you.”

“I wasn’t aware that Thor knew we had it,” Fury responds cautiously.

Frigga favors the man with a small smile, “my other son.”

“You’ve heard from Loki?” The director asks holding back his sudden interest.

“He came to me, yes.”

“Did he say anything about Captain Rogers? Do you know where they are?”

“Unfortunately Loki did not tell me where he currently is staying and if he does not want to be found, there is little we can do about it. He did not mention Captain Rogers, but Thor did tell me about the attack. I have faith that Loki is caring for him. Thor will return tomorrow, please see that he brings the tesseract to Asgard, but do not allow him to know I was here. Thor is not as astute as Loki, but he will question my involvement.”

“I will see to it ma’am.”

Day 71

Thor stands with Stark, Dr. Banner and Director Fury in the underground lab at the Triskellion. He watches as Tony and Dr. Banner carefully maneuver the tesseract into the special containment box they created for it. Within the hour Thor is on the roof calling for Heimdall.

Loki is lounging in a chair next to the bed reading a book. Occasionally he looks up at Steve to check on him. The Captain is finally starting to improve from his numerous injuries, but it is slow going and he knows Steve is getting frustrated with his inability to care for himself, or to even get out of the bed on his own.

This has led to a great deal of embarrassment as Loki must carry him, help undress him and place him in a pool of water in order to bathe. Even though he is hungry, Steve is grateful the god has enough sense to only provide broths and other liquids for sustenance so at least he is spared the humiliation of any other bathroom related unpleasantness.

The only upside to all of this is that he secretly enjoys his time at the pool for bathing. Getting outside is a nice change for his boredom and even if he must endure the indignity of being carried, he does enjoy the closeness as the god gently cradles his body against his own.

Day 72
“We don’t even know if he is still on Earth,” Tony remarks not trying very hard to hide his frustration.

Dr. Banner removes his glasses and begins to clean the lenses on the corner of his shirt tail. “We have to operate on the assumption that he is until we have evidence to the contrary.”

“I don’t know how you can remain so calm about this,” the billionaire quips.

Dr. Banner smirks, “It’s not like I have another option.”

Malekith has been over the entire helicarrier and has found no sign of the god. Going back to Thanos without either Loki or the scepter is not an option and so he moves out from the helicarrier into the hidden hanger and begins to search the 3 behemoth machines in the final stages of construction.
I'll Follow You
Shinedown

If I could find assurance
To leave you behind
I know my better half would fade
And all my doubts
Is a staircase for you
Opened out of this base
The first step is the one you believe in
The second one might be profound
I'll follow you down
To the eye of the storm
Don't worry I'll keep you warm
I'll follow you down
While we are passing through space
I don't care if we fall from grace
I'll follow you down
You can have the money and the world
The angels and the pearls
Even trade my heart for color blue
Just like the tower we never built
And the shadow of all the guilt
When the other hand was pointing at you
I'll follow you down
To where forever lies
Without a doubt I'm on your side
There is no where else I'd rather be
I'm not about to compromise
Give you up to say goodbye
I've got you through the deep
I'll keep you close to me
I'll follow you down
To the eye of the storm
Don't worry I'll keep you warm
I'll follow you down
While we are passing through space
I don't care if we fall from grace
I'll follow you
If I could find assurance
To leave you behind
I know my better half would fade
I'll follow you down
Day 73

“You know at some point I am going to have to try and walk again,” Steve tells Loki as the god carries him the short distance to the water to bathe.

“Yes. As soon as the breaks in your legs are stable enough to support your weight we will work on it, but for now we cannot risk further damage, your body is already taxed trying to heal as it is. Even with the serum your injuries were nearly fatal.”

Loki steps into the water and walks until it is up to his knees then carefully sets Steve on the submerged shelf of rock that acts as a seat for the blonde as he bathes. Once he is submerged, Steve pulls away the towel that had been covering his lower body, providing at least some semblance of modesty.

“You’re getting your pants wet again,” the Captain tells him.

Loki cannot hide the smile that creeps across his face, “how observant. You must be getting better.”

“Ha Ha,” Steve laughs as he splashes water at the gods legs.

Loki arches an eyebrow at the blonde who tries to smile innocently at him.

“You could just join me, you know,” Steve invites.

“I didn’t bring anything to wear.”

Steve looks down at his own naked body in the water, “neither did I.”

Day 74

*Loki can see Steve as the man walks into the helicarrier lab. He is smiling and talking easily with Stark who is in his Iron Man suit. The billionaire looks directly at the god and grins, just before pointing a repulsor glove at the floor and firing. Loki can see the city far below and he looks at Steve who is gazing down with the wind wiping in his hair. The soldier makes eye contact with Loki and gives a small sad smile before he steps into the hole and plummets to the ground.*

It has been hours since Loki woke from his nightmare and he has hardly moved. As he lays in bed listening to Steve breathe, he tries to still his mind and reassure himself that the blonde is resilient, but the more he thinks the more upset he becomes.

“You gonna tell me what has you so worked up?” Steve asks from beside him with his eyes still closed.

“I am sorry Captain. I did not mean to wake you.”

By now Steve knows Loki only calls him Captain when he is upset so he keeps his tone light. “I was already awake.”

“I don’t think I will ever understand why you just keep trying to sacrifice yourself,” the god begins as Steve inwardly groans not wanting to revisit this subject.

“We talked about this Loki. I fight for what is important.”

“I told you that I could handle it. It was my fight and mine alone and look at you. Just……look……”
Loki’s voice hitches slightly at the last. He takes in a deep breath and suddenly stands from the bed and heads to the door.

“Where are you going?” Steve asks.

“I need some air.” Loki responds with his back to the bed. “I’ll be back.”

Day 75

Steve is sitting up on the bed while Loki prepares another liquid based meal. It has been tense between the two men since the day prior and the Captain is getting tired of it. When Loki walks over and places a bowl of soup next to the bed, Steve reaches out and grabs his arm before he can walk away again. The god looks down to where his arm is being gripped and frowns.

“We’re gonna talk about this Loki.”

“What is there to talk about? You are determined to sacrifice yourself for your cause. There is nothing I can do to stop you from doing it.”

Steve has finally had enough and snaps, “you say I’m always quick to sacrifice myself? But what about you?”

Loki gives a derisive snort. "Everything I do suits my purpose. Why would I sacrifice myself for anything?"

"When you fell from the bifrost-" the blonde begins.

“Exactly, I fell.”

“No, not really, you let go,” the blonde challenges.

“No, I didn’t.”

“That's not what it looked like when you showed me,” Steve responds gently.

“Well I assure you, however it happened, it wasn't for any altruistic reason.”

Steve tries a different tactic. “You saved me, back on the helicarrier. You could have left me. You could have been easily killed trying to protect me and yet you did it. Heck you tried to send me away so you could fight the Chitauri alone.”

“That is not the same as sacrificing myself.

“Isn't it? You put your life in danger. For me.”

“My life..... I am not..... Steve you are worth 10 of me.... more even. There is no question about how valuable you are. It would be nothing for me to die so that you may live. Probably better if that were to happen.”

A frown has crept onto Steve’s face as Loki is speaking. "You're wrong Loki. Your life has value.” Loki huffs out a laugh. "Stop. Just stop. If you can't accept that, then at least accept that I think your life has value. You are important. Ok? To me."

“Then why can you not accept the same of me about you?” the god asks.
Day 76

Loki tries to make the trip to Brooklyn quick. He wants to be back before the Captain wakes. The god lets himself in to Steve’s apartment and heads directly to a large bookcase in the living room. He knows what he is after and finds it soon enough. The god gathers a few more items and opens the door to Yggdrasil once again.

When he steps back through he knows he is caught when he see’s Steve propped up on the bed.

“Where did you go?” the Captain asks.

“I know its been dreadfully hard, being stuck here like this so I thought I would bring you something to help pass the time,” the god replies as he hands over the sketch book and box of pens and pencils he retrieved from Steve’s apartment.

“So you’re saying you broke into my apartment again?” Steve says trying to sound stern, but he cannot hold back his pleased grin, “Thank you Loki.

“You’re welcome Steve.”

Day 77

“I would really like to try walking soon Loki,” Steve announces. The god looks up from the book he is reading and sets it down on the bed. The blonde is sitting in a chair by the window with a blanket on his lap. He has a book of his own sitting face down on the arm of the chair.

“If you wish it, I can check your injuries again and if your legs are healing well, maybe we can start getting you on your feet,” the god offers despite his mixed feelings. He is glad Steve is healing, but Loki knows that as soon as Steve is healed he will want to go back.

Steve grins and Loki’s heart flutters at the sight. The god rises to his feet and walks to the chair where he lowers his body so Steve can wrap his arms around his neck as he gently picks him up with practiced ease. The process should have been awkward and in fact was the first couple of times, but now the pair move in concert as though they were made for each other.

Loki carries the soldier to the bed and bends to sit the Captain on the edge. Steve lets his arms linger just a little longer than necessary around the gods neck, keeping their upper bodies close. When he does let go there is a slight coloring to his cheeks. He braces his arms behind himself, careful not to put too much pressure on his healing wrist, and pulls his body further up onto the bed as Loki carefully swings his legs up so he can lay down. Steve lays back on the bed as the god sits beside him.

Loki brings his hand up to the Captains head and gently places it over the now healed gash. There is no trace of scar tissue running under the short blonde hair and when he closes his eyes to concentrate, he can sense no evidence of the fracture or swelling from before. Satisfied, he moves his hand down to Steve’s shoulder and repeats the process. He places both hands on the soldiers chest as he checks his ribs.

He has seen Steve without his shirt enough to know the burns are mostly healed, new pink flesh in their place. Then he glides his hands down the flat planes of the soldiers stomach. He can feel Steve’s muscles tense beneath him as the man pulls in a shaky breath. Steve has been watching
Loki’s face intently. Cataloging the different expressions as they cross his features all while the gods eyes remain closed.

Loki splays his fingers across Steve’s abdomen, grateful that Captain still has his shirt on. He can feel the tightness in his pants and knows it would be much worse if he were touching the mans bare skin. For this reason he also keeps his eyes closed, unable to bear looking at the blondes perfection.

The worst of Steve’s internal injuries have healed and so Loki withdraws his hands and opens his eyes. He shifts his body further down the bed and places a palm either side of Steve’s right leg. He slowly draws his hands down towards the soldiers ankle. His touch is gentle and the movements evoke a feeling of sensuality. The blonde raises up on this elbows to watch the god as he lifts his hands and places them on Steve’s left leg in the same manner, however, this time he holds Steve’s gaze with his own as he moves his hands.

The blonde swallows hard trying not to get drawn too far into those green eyes. He is in too deep as it is. He flicks his eyes away and the moment is broken. He is both disappointed and relieved when Loki stands and walks a few steps away. “You’re injuries are healing well. I think we can start you trying to walk tomorrow.” Steve cannot hold back the grin that splits his face.

Day 78

The Captain is sitting on the side of the bed preparing to stand for the first time since the attack. Loki stands in front of the blonde and grasps Steve’s hands in his own. He braces his arms and allows the other man to pull himself up to standing, ready to assist in a moments notice.

Steve takes a tentative step forward while Loki takes a step back. They continue in this manner and after a few steps Steve looks up to Loki with a smile on his face. He pulls his hand back from Loki and steps back to sit down on the bed again. He grins in triumph ignoring the slight pain radiating from his left thigh. It won’t be much longer and he will be completely healed. He will rest and try walking again.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

We have finally arrived at the Chapter that features the song that inspired this entire work. Finally.

Chapter Notes

A couple of quick notes:

I took some liberties with the frost giants. It worked with the story better. Forgive me.

In a previous chapter there was mention of an incident on Vanaheim. Over the next several chapters this incident will come up. I don't describe it in detail, but it does affect Loki's behavior quite a bit. More so than what happened at the hands of Thanos. Please refer to the story tags for possible triggers.

Chapter 16

My Heart I surrender

I Prevail

I'm a ghost in your eyes.
A shadow you can't seem to recognize.
I have a thought of you for every, star in the sky
But I'm scared, I'll never cross your mind.
Yeah, I'm scared.
Will our stars ever align?
Will two hearts, beat in time?
These words you should always remember,
To you, my heart I surrender.
Chasing love that can never be mine.
Maybe one day you'll realize.
These words you should always remember,
To you, my heart I surrender.
My heart I surrender.
And I can't count the times.
I stayed awake pretending you were mine.
Now I'm left here with this emptiness inside,
Why can't I make you mine?
Will our stars ever align?
Will two hearts, beat in time?
These words you should always remember,
To you, my heart I surrender.
Chasing love that can never be mine.
Maybe one day you'll realize.
These words you should always remember,
To you, my heart I surrender.

Day 79

Something has woken Steve. He lays in the bed staring at the ceiling waiting for the sound again. At first he hears nothing and then Loki lets out a low moan. Steve knows he is dreaming again. He turns towards Loki and sees him curled up on his side facing towards the wall. His body is tense and Steve can hear his voice now. He hears him beg not to be hurt anymore. Hears him cry out as if in pain. Feels the bed move as his body trembles beside him. Steve cannot lay there and listen to his torment, so he does what he knows has worked before and he turns to Loki and carefully pulls the slimmer man's body into his. He wraps his arm around Loki’s chest and holds him close while he whispers in his ear, “I’ve got you. You’re not alone anymore. I’ll take care of you.” Steve has no way of knowing if this helps soothe the man or not, but within minutes he has calmed and is once again sleeping peacefully.

Loki slowly comes awake and is aware of a warmth across his back and a weight draped across him. It is not entirely unpleasant. When he opens his eyes he realizes Steve has him pulled tight against his body, his back to Steve’s chest. For a moment he tenses. Then when he realizes Steve is still asleep, he relaxes back into him. He lays this way for quite a while, enjoying the peacefulness. Steve shifts slightly, his arm drifting lower onto Loki’s hip and now he can feel his warm breath on his neck. To his horror Loki can feel his body start to respond to the man in bed with him.

He tries to control himself, tries to think of anything other than Steve, and when he knows he is losing the battle, he tries to extricate himself from the man's grip so he can leave the bed.

“Please stay,” he hears Steve whisper against his neck and he has no choice really, but to relax again and be lulled back to sleep. No choice at all because that is what he truly wants.

Day 80

“When I was younger, I never thought I would get married, have a family. Who would want a scrawny sickly guy like me? After the serum there wasn’t much time to think about the future, you know?”

“What about your Peggy? Surely you wanted that with her?” Loki asks as he sips from a steaming mug of tea.

Steve is silent for a moment while he thinks back to the kiss he shared with Peggy almost 70 years before. “To be honest, I cared about her, but I never thought for a million years she would ever feel that way about me. And by the time I realized there was a chance for us, it was too late. I went in the ice.”

Loki’s heart aches for what the Captain has lost even while he feels a twinge of jealousy. “And
now?"

“What about now?”

“Do you see yourself getting married? Having kids? Being domesticated as it were?” He asks with a smirk.

Steve chuckles, “not sure I would think of myself as domesticated. But I mean yeah, I’ve thought about it.”

Loki quirks an eyebrow at the blonde, “what do you think Steve?” he asks as he smiles into his mug and silently thrills at the blush that creeps up the blonds face. Loki smirks again at the Captain as he waits for a response.

“You really love making me uncomfortable don’t you?”

“Every second of it,” Loki teases.

Steve just smiles and turns his attention to the book sitting on the arm of his chair. Loki accepts that the conversation is over and goes back to his tea as he gazes out the window.

“3,” Steve says after awhile.

“Pardon?”

“I think about having 3 kids. A nice home. A partner to share everything with.” He looks away feeling foolish. “Its just a dream though. Friends, family, someone special, those things are out of reach for Captain America and as long as I’m him, Steve Rogers cannot have it either.”

Day 81

“What is it that you want Loki?”

The god is startled by the sudden question and looks at Steve, confusion written on his face.

“I mean what motivates you? Why do you do the things you do?” the blonde clarifies.

Loki inhales a breath and exhales it slowly gathering his thoughts, “I am just like any man. I want the same things you do. Friends, family, someone special,” he says repeating Steve’s words from the day before.

The soldier sighs at this and pinches the bridge of his nose. “Can you not......why do you have to be so difficult?”

“I'm not being difficult.”

“Then answer the question. Truthfully. Don't just throw my own words back at me,” Steve huffs.

“Is that what you think? You told me before you want people to see beyond Captain America, but you don't give me the same consideration? Is it so hard to believe that all I want, all I have ever wanted was to be accepted and loved?”

Steve is taken aback by this sudden outburst. They sit in silence both refusing to look at the other. Finally the Captain speaks, "you're right. I'm sorry Loki. You are stuck in a role just as much as I
Day 82

Malekith is a patient man. He has been over every square inch of the 3 new helicarriers in the hidden bunker. When he is certain Loki is not on any of them, he moves out and into the hanger area. This area is mostly open and does not take long to search and so he moves up and begins to search the building towering above. He is nothing if not methodical and extremely motivated.

Day 83

"You and Thor are so very different from another."

"Yes, raised to be brothers and yet I suppose I always knew. I am not exactly an example of Asgardian strength and virility. Reading, practicing magic, even my choice of weapons were all considered feminine traits. It was painfully obvious that I was different. And if I were not being raised in the palace by the king and queen, it would not have mattered as much, but appearances must be kept up after all." Steve nods his head at this.

"I thought it was all of that paired with my proclivities that caused everyone to treat me different, it was much later that I learned the entire truth."

Here Loki pauses and stares into the fireplace. Steve knows not to push him. So he waits patiently for the god to gather his thoughts.

"Do you know of the boogeyman?" he asks suddenly looking directly at Steve.

The blonde nods in response.

"On Asgard the boogeyman is always portrayed as a frost giant. Vile creatures. Blue with red eyes. Violent and mindless. We are told stories from a young age of how they steal children and turn them into little frost giants. This is supposedly how they reproduce because they are all male. We are told of how they destroyed their lands and that they come to pillage our realms for resources. They are evil and violent. The stories are quite effective at keeping children in line. The fact that there has not been an incident with the frost giants in over 1000 years is irrelevant.

"It wasn't until I was older that I learned the truth about them. Learned that I was one of them. One of those monsters. And when I tried to finish the job Odin started a millennia ago and rid the realms of their filth, I was denied, cast out, shunned."

Steve stays silent. Thor told them about the events leading up to the destruction of the bifrost and Loki showed him what happened leading up to him falling from the bridge as well, so he is very aware of those events. He doesn’t agree with what Loki did, but he can sympathize with the hurt Loki was feeling and knowing that Odin and his father Bor both also essentially tried to wipe out the frost giants, he can see how Loki would follow their lead in a bid to gain Odin’s acceptance. He doesn’t agree with it and he certainly doesn’t like it, but he is coming to accept it as he learns more about the god and his past.

“Suddenly it all started to become clear,” Loki continues, “why I was always treated differently. It was because I was different. Turns out frost giants are all male. They don’t steal children though. When they need to reproduce some will develop the reproductive organs needed to carry a child.
Suddenly my proclivities made sense. It all made sense.”

“When you say proclivities you mean....?”

“That I like men,” Loki spits out. And there it is. Out in the open. Loki has closely guarded this secret most of his life, allowing only a select few trusted individuals to know. Steve silently thrills hearing this, even though he knows it is a difficult subject for the god. He had suspected and hoped it was the case, but now……...

“Is that so bad? There are worse things than liking guys.”

Loki chokes out a bitter laugh that is completely devoid of humor, “you mean like trying to take over another realm?”

“So all of this started because of that? Because your parents don't accept who you are? Because you are ashamed.”

"Oh Steve. If only it were that easy. What I wanted, what I craved was to be accepted, loved, to belong. And when I learned that was never meant to be, that is what led me to being vulnerable. What fed my rage. I let it consume me. All of the pain and hate and betrayal reached up and pulled me down until I could no longer hold on and I simply let go. This is what allowed others to get in my head, what led me to invade earth.”

Loki pauses and Steve is not sure if he will continue his story or not.

"This is why you want to change your fate? You want out from their control."

“What I want is to be my own man. I want the things I rightfully deserve. The things all men deserve; as you said, friends, family, someone special.” He turns to Steve and the blonde can see the way his tears make Loki’s eyes shine. “Why can't I have these things?”

It is heart wrenching to hear. Steve is out of his seat in an instant. Kneeling at Loki's feet. Pulling him into an embrace. He can feel the god shudder against him and begins to rub his back in slow gentle circles.

They stay that way for several minutes until Loki slightly pulls his head back. Before Steve knows what is happening, Loki has his lips pressed against his own. The blondes eyes widen in surprise, but he does not pull away. Instead, he responds by running his hand up Loki's back and tangling his fingers in the man's dark hair. Loki pulls back slightly to look in the Captains eyes to gauge his reaction.

Tony and Natasha scream in Steve’s head that this is his enemy. That he has to stop this right now, but Steve’s heart is telling him something else entirely. And for once, he wants to listen to his heart, not his mind. And so he does. For once in his life, Steve Rogers forgets Captain America and does what he wants.

He pulls Loki against his body and kisses him again. He opens his mouth and runs his tongue across Loki’s lips seeking entrance. When Loki parts his lips he tentatively moves his tongue into the other man’s mouth. Loki responds by placing a hand on Steve’s chest and kissing back with force. It feels so good, his body is awakening as Loki begins to run his hands over his shoulders, down his arms, across his back. When Loki's hands get to the hem of his shirt he pulls back slightly so that the shirt can be discarded. The god runs his hand across Steve’s taut stomach, up his chest and strokes his cheek. “Captain,” he breathes as his stomach starts to clench with unease. It's fine. It's fine. It'll be different this time.
That one word is all it takes to break the spell. Steve blinks his eyes and gives a slight shake of his head then sits back on his heels.

"I'm sorry. I don't know what...sorry" he says then jumps to his feet, grabs his shirt and bolts for the door.

Loki sits staring at the spot where Steve was just moments before. Then he drops his head.

After several minutes he gets up and starts to pace around the room. Best to act like nothing happened. He tries to ignore it when his hands shake, but when he realizes he has been staring at the wall for several minutes, he gives up and goes to the bed where he lays down on the side where Steve usually sleeps. He curls up into a fetal position and closes his eyes hoping to block out the look on Steve’s face just before he left. Hoping to block out the fear and the humiliation.

Loki doesn’t know how long it is before he hears the door open and close. He can hear Steve’s footfalls as he comes toward the bed and he can sense that the soldier is standing behind him. Loki pretends to sleep, not ready to face him yet. He is almost startled into moving when he feels a hand stroke across his hair. He barely makes out the whisper, "my name is Steve".
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Steve and Loki have a talk about what is going on between them and it changes everything,

Chapter 17

Break In
Halestorm

Put your lighter in the air and lead me back home
When it's all said and done and follow where the air goes
I hear you night after night calling out my name
And I'm finding myself running to meet you
I didn't want to escape
From the bricks that I laid down
You are the only one
The only one that sees me
That trusts me and believes me
You are the only one
The only one that knows me
And in the dark you show me
It's perfectly reckless
Damn you leave me defenseless
So break in
Break in
You let me fall apart without letting go
Then you pick up the pieces and you make me whole
I didn't want to escape
From the bricks that I laid down
You are the only one
The only one that sees me
That trusts me and believes me
You are the only one
The only one that knows me
And in the dark you show me
It's perfectly reckless
Damn you leave me defenseless
So break in
And take everything I have
Until there is nothing left
Until it's just your voice in my head
And when the lights come on
You see me as I am
You're still inside me

You are the only one
The only that sees me
That trusts me and believes me
You are the only one
The only one that knows me
And in the dark you show me
It's perfectly reckless
Damn you leave me defenseless
So break in
Break in

Day 84

Loki wakes up before dawn disorientated. He is on the wrong side of the bed and the space feels too large. It takes him a minute to process that he is still laying on Steve’s side and that the man has not come to bed. Sitting up he looks across the room and can see the blonde looking out the window. The room is dark but his silhouette is bathed in moonlight. His muscular body is on display as he is only wearing the boxer shorts he usually sleeps in. Loki gets out of the bed and Steve slightly turns his head when he hears him move, but as Loki draws near he turns back to the window.

The god stands behind him and starts to reach out a hand to touch his shoulder, but he holds back. He knows he needs to fix this, “Steve,” he begins. "About before....." he trails off not sure of what he wants to say. Steve turns around and Loki can see the look of determination on the blondes face.

"Loki, what do you want from me? Not Captain America. I know what you want from him. I mean from me, Steve Rogers. Because we’ve been dancing around this for a while now and I know what I want from you. So no more games. What do you truly want from me?"

Loki doesn't know what to say. His silver tongue has failed him and so he says nothing. After a moment Steve gives a resigned sigh, "I see. So that's it then," and he shoulders past Loki heading to the bed to get some sleep.

Finally Loki breaks his silence, "no. Wait. Steve…. please....." Don’t be such a coward, he thinks to himself. "I want Captain America to help me, but I want Steve Rogers to......to......," He isn’t Elgin. He would never hurt you like that. "I want more than this,” he says as he gestures wildly with his arms, voice starting to sound panicky even to his own ears. “I want us to... I want us!" he finally settles on.

Luckily Steve doesn't need to hear more. He grabs Loki and pulls him into a tight embrace laying his head on the gods shoulder as he takes in a shuddery breath. Loki is so relieved he almost sags against Steve, so he wraps his arms around the blondes waist and pulls him closer. Loki is content to hold him until he feels soft kisses on his neck and along the curve of his ear.

"Steve..." he whispers, brows furrowing. The god wants this so very much and can feel his body start to react to the other man's touch, but that undercurrent of fear is still there. Steve starts to run his hands down Loki's back, then he grabs the hem of his shirt and pulls it over Loki’s head and begins to stroke his bare skin. He runs his hands around his ribcage and glides his palms up his chest where Loki grips both of his hands in his, stopping his ministrations. Steve responds by leaning in to kiss the god. His lips are soft and warm against Loki's own and when he opens his mouth Loki responds
by brushing his tongue across Steve’s.

He is so wrapped up in the sensations that Steve is surprised when Loki pulls away suddenly, "Steve, we can’t. I mean you don't have to do this. I know what it means and I can't ask that of you and if we don’t stop now I’m not sure I will be able to." Loki is trying to stop Steve from doing something he will later regret. He knows how the soldier feels about intimacy and will not take advantage of the situation. And if he is honest with himself, his own past history makes him afraid to move forward as he battles with himself between arousal and fear.

Steve responds by leaning back in and pulling Loki into another kiss. This one is hard and wanting. There is no tenderness when he pushes his tongue into Loki’s mouth. And no softness when he bites Loki’s lower lip as he turns to whisper in the gods ear. "I want this Loki, please. I want you."

These words cause Loki’s heart to flutter and his cock to jump as he takes in Steve’s lustful gaze and the tenting of his boxer shorts. All he can do is groan as he is pulled to the bed and made to sit on the edge as Steve kneels between his thighs. "I want this. Okay. Whatever you are thinking. Just forget it. I know what I am doing," Steve tells him, his face is so earnest that Loki feels he could never deny him anything.

He will be my undoing the god thinks to himself.

Steve leans in and kisses Loki desperately, pulling his body flush against his own. He glides one hand down Loki's back while the other tightens in his inky black hair. When the god breaks the kiss he is panting slightly and reaches out to caress Steve’s cheek.

“Please Loki."

The god is at war with himself. He wants this, but he is scared, panic clawing at him. He tries to avoid Steve’s gaze, but the man rests his hand on Loki’s chin and turns his face so he has no choice but to look into those deep blue eyes. He could lose himself in those eyes. In the end arousal wins out and he pushes down his fear. He surges forward to press his lips to Steve’s with a ferociousness that surprises them both. Loki slightly opens his mouth and lightly sweeps his tongue across Steve’s lips. The blonde man reacts on instinct and opens his mouth for the god to explore, moaning lightly as he does.

The god leans back on the bed pulling Steve back with him so the soldier has to rise from the floor. Loki shifts and Steve lowers himself to lay beside the god.

"Loki...." Steve breathes as the gods hand strokes down his body and brushes across the front of his boxer. Pulling back Loki looks at the blonde, gauging his reaction as he runs his fingers along the waist band.

"Tell me what you want."

"I... I.... don't know..." Steve stammers, his lack of experience making him suddenly unsure.

"Do you want my hands, my mouth, do you want to enter me, do you want me to take you?"

"Yes," is Steve’s only reply.

Loki has to hold back a chuckle as he reaches his cool hand past the waist band and into Steve’s boxers.

Steve sucks in a breath and closes his eyes as slender fingers begin to work his cock.
"What do you want?" Loki whispers again in Steve’s ear as he leans closer, his hand never ceasing the movement on his swollen member. Steve only gulps, unable to articulate an answer.

Loki licks up the side of Steve’s neck then breathes into his ear, "do you want my hands?" he continues to stroke along the blondes length, "my mouth?" he asks slightly nipping Steve’s earlobe. "Or do you want to enter me?" Steve gasps and his hips surge against Loki's hand.

"Ahhhh, there it is Steve." He tries to push down the stab of anxiety that blossoms in his chest, but he wants this. Oh how he wants it.

Steve can feel Loki's smile against his neck and blushes furiously. "I don't know what to do," Steve admits, his face turning even redder.

Loki doesn't respond verbally. Instead he captures Steve’s lips with his own and thrusts his tongue into his mouth. He continues to work Steve’s cock as he kisses the blondes jaw line and then nips at his pulse point. When he latches his mouth on Steve’s neck and sucks hard, the blonde man stiffens and groans and Loki can feel the sudden wetness in Steve’s shorts and on his hand.

Steve relaxes back into the bed even as he draws his hand over his face to hide his embarrassment. “I’m sorry. That wasn’t…” he doesn’t say anything more, not really sure how to end the sentence.

“Hush, nothing to be sorry for. Rest, there is time,” Loki soothes as he gestures with his hand and works a quick enchantment to ease the blonde into sleep. *Best to stop this now, before it goes any farther* he tells himself.

Day 85

Loki is laying in bed replaying the events of the previous night and he finds himself getting aroused all over again. Beside him, Steve is sleeping peacefully as he has been all night since Loki used the enchantment to help him sleep. He feels bad about doing that to the blonde, but he had to stop things from progressing any further. He can feel the shift on the bed as Steve wakes and he can hear the groan that the soldier cannot repress.

The bed shifts again as Steve moves close to the god and presses his chest close to Loki’s back. “I know you’re awake Loki.”

“How do you know?”

Steve huffs out a laugh, “I can tell by how you breathe. That and you are thinking so loudly I can almost hear it.” When Loki doesn’t respond Steve continues, “I’m sorry about last night. I didn’t mean to fall asleep like that. I don’t know what happened.”

The god feels a twinge of guilt but says nothing.

“I would like to try again,” Steve tells him, pushing his body even closer to the god.

Loki closes his eyes and sucks in a breath but still says nothing. Getting concerned, Steve raises up on his arm and looks down at the god, “hey, whats going on? Look at me. Loki?”

The god still doesn’t respond and Steve flops on to his back covering his face with his arm. “Look, I said I was sorry about last night. If…. If you changed your mind and you don’t want this…. I guess I can accept that, but at least tell me why.”
Loki turns around so he is facing the blonde and grabs his hand forcing it down to his erect cock. “Does it feel like I changed my mind Steve?” He snaps.

The soldier is startled, but also relieved. He doesn’t pull his hand away when Loki releases him. Instead he squeezes gently until Loki lets out a whimper then he begins to stroke along the front of the gods sleep pants.

Loki grabs Steve’s wrist and stills his hand, “Steve, I am not a good man and I fear I will ruin you.”

To Loki’s surprise the blonde chuckles and plants a kiss to his temple. “That happened long before this. I was ruined that first night in Stuttgart. I looked down at you beneath me on the ground and I knew. The last couple of months have all led up to this.” He leans in and kisses Loki’s lips gently as he pushes his hand beneath the waist band of Loki’s pants. He grips the gods painfully erect cock and begins a slow gentle stroking.

The god returns Steve’s kisses keeping the pace slow and easy. Occasionally he lets out a low whine as the soldier continues to stroke him. He is close. So very close. Loki starts to undulate his hips in time with Steve’s strokes. He reaches his hand up and grabs the back of the other mans head, tugs at his hair while deepening the kiss. A few more strokes and Loki is gone, moaning into Steve’s mouth as he rides out his orgasm. And it is so good. Letting another man touch him this way, he can feel the tension leaving his body, the fear isn’t gone, but it hasn’t consumed him. Please…. He begs of the fates or who ever else may listen.

When Loki’s breathing evens out again he opens his eyes to see Steve gazing at him intently with a small smile on his lips. “What?” the god asks suddenly feeling self conscious.

“Nothing. It’s just, you’re beautiful like that…. I mean you’re beautiful all time, but more so like that,” Steve rambles.

“Like what?”

“When you moan with pleasure with my name on your lips,” Steve replies huskily with a hint of a smirk on his face.

They have walked down to the bathing pool. When they arrive Steve strips off his shirt and begins to pull off his pants. He pauses when he notices that Loki is just standing there. “You’re clothes are going to get wet if you don’t take them off.”

Loki sighs but smiles as he pulls off his own shirt. The soldier takes a moment to admire the gods body, all pale smooth skin, long lean muscles. So very different from Steve’s own. He can feel his cock stir at the sight and moves to stand directly in front of the other man. He pulls at the waist band of Loki’s pants until the god relents and steps out of them. Steve leans in and kisses the gods lips lightly. Pulling Steve closer so their bodies are lined up together, Loki deepens the kiss. Reluctantly, the blonde pulls back and leads Loki into the water where they sit on the rock ledge, legs touching.

Loki reaches up and cups Steve’s cheek, running his thumb across his skin and the blonde leans into the touch closing his eyes. His arousal is waning in lieu of something else. He pulls Loki’s body closer to his own and the god willingly rests his head on Steve’s chest while he strokes his hand up and down Loki’s back. It is peaceful and loving, calming and caring. Both men are content to sit and simply be. Please let this time be different, Loki silently pleads as he looks up at the blonde and makes a decision to take a chance.
Later that night Steve is sitting on the edge of the bed twisting his hands nervously. He is waiting for Loki to finish in the kitchen and come to bed, but the god seems to be taking an inordinate amount of time. When Loki is finally finished he walks to his side of the bed and quickly sheds his shirt before slipping between the covers.

Steve also lays down and turns to the god letting his eyes roam up and down the mostly covered form. Loki can feel Steve’s eyes on him, but he remains still. After a few minutes Steve grows impatient and moves closer to the god. He turns Loki’s face towards his own and kisses him hard. When he releases the gods mouth he moves down and nips at his neck before running his tongue over the sensitive flesh. He continues to suck and lick at Loki’s neck as he takes his hand and works it under the blanket covering them both to lightly cup the gods hardening cock.

Steve pauses long enough to throw the blanket off to the floor then he pulls his boxers down and starts tugging on Loki’s sleep pants. The god grins at Steve’s enthusiasm and lifts his hips to help then turns on his side so they are face to face. Steve leans in and playfully licks across Loki’s lips causing the god to laugh out loud.

“Heck no!” he chuckles as he gets back up and pads into the rest room. Steve watches the god, enjoying the view of all his pale flesh. With a small bottle in his hand, Loki climbs back into the bed. He opens the bottle and pours some of the liquid in his palm before placing it on the nightstand, then he reaches out and runs his now slick palm up Steve’s erection. The blonde groans at the touch and pushes his hips closer to Loki. The god positions himself closer so their bodies are flush to one another then he runs his hand over his own cock and then grips them both in his hand, squeezing slightly.

“Oh god….” Steve moans. He can’t stop the shallow thrust of his hips, the feeling of his cock sliding against Loki’s is so intense and when the god runs his thumb over the head he lets out an undignified whine. The blonde looks at Loki and has to bite down on the words that try to spill from his mouth. It’s too soon for that, at least too soon to give voice to it. Instead he focuses on the look of sheer bliss on his lovers face.

The soldier tangles his fingers into Loki’s inky black hair and pulls him in to kiss him. He teases the god’s mouth open and nips at his lower lip. He pauses, lips still pressed together and furrows his brow when Loki twists his hand just so. “Yes… so good Loki…. Not able to hold back, he devolves into a series of moans and whines as Loki squeezes their cocks tighter together. The increased friction is all it takes to send Steve over the edge with Loki following right behind.

Day 86

Steve wakes up before the sun rises and heads into the kitchen to make breakfast. While he was healing from his injuries he didn’t give much thought as to where Loki got supplies from. He has since learned that the cabin is located a few hours hike outside a small town in Colorado. Loki made a habit of keeping the cabin stocked with supplies, but has also made several trips into town to pick up additional food and also clothing since Steve has gotten back on his feet. For his part, Steve is content to stay at the cabin and enjoy his time with the god, but he knows it will have to come to an end sooner or later.

For now though, he puts those thoughts out of his head in favor of making a nice breakfast for Loki.

The god awakens and stretches his arms over head just as Steve is plating the food. Loki grins as he
watches the blonde move about the kitchen in only his boxer shorts. He loves how Steve is not self conscious about his body. He is still grinning when Steve walks over and hands him his breakfast along with a glass of juice. He leans in to place a kiss on the side of the gods mouth, “good morning. I was thinking maybe we could go for a walk later, get out a little.”

“I think I’d like that,” the god answers as he takes a bite of his eggs.

Breakfast finished, Steve packs a bag with some food and a blanket. He also grabs the bottle of lube off Loki’s nightstand while the god isn’t looking. They leave the cabin and begin to explore the trails in the surrounding area. Loki is familiar with the area and takes Steve to see all his favorite spots. He shows him rock formations that he finds interesting, the best spot to watch the wildlife and finally a secluded spot next to a bend in the nearby river.

“I often came here to meditate,” the god tells him, looking wistfully out at the water as Steve spreads out the blanket and begins pulling food out of the bag.

“How long have you had this place? Seems like you wouldn’t have had much time to spend here. And how does a god even own land and a cabin on Earth anyway?” Steve asks with a grin.

Loki gives him an amused smile, “such inquisitiveness. Is it not enough to be satisfied with the setting?” When Steve just continues to smile Loki goes on. “Technically the cabin is on protected lands, owned by your government. There are ways that I ensure it stays hidden from prying eyes. As for how I can own it? It just is. I made it, so it is mine. My home has stood for close to 100 years. I have walked the lands of many realms, but something draws me back here.” Loki looks at his lover and smiles, “Now I know why.”

Steve blushes at Loki’s declaration and gestures for the god to sit beside him. “Maybe I was meant to go into the ice, so we could be here at this time. Fated to be together,” he says as he hands Loki an apple.

They take their time enjoying the solitude and eating lunch until they have had their fill and both lie back on the blanket hands intertwined.

"Loki?"

“Yes Steve?"

“Thank you.”

“For what?” The god asks.

“For everything. You saved my life, took care of me. Everything. Bringing me out here. I just wanted to say thank you.”

Loki rolls to his side and looks at his lover, running a hand down his chest stopping to tease at the button on his pants. “I assure you everything I have done has been for selfish reasons,” the god replies with a mischievous smile.

“Is that so?” Steve asks as he turns to face Loki and leans in for a kiss, but keeps his lips just a breath away.

Loki leans in the rest of the way and smiles against Steve’s lips. The soldier can feel Loki’s smile and parts his lips, an obvious invitation, then he pushes forward so that Loki is once again laying on his
back. He runs one hand down the god's side while he supports his weight with the other. Leaning down he nuzzles at Loki’s neck until the god turns his head to allow more access. Steve wastes no time and immediately attacks the bared neck with his teeth and tongue. Soon the god is writhing beneath him, hand fisted in Steve's short hair.

The soldier pulls back to admire the marks already forming on the god's neck then grabs Loki's shirt and starts to pull it up from the bottom. Sitting up, Loki pulls the shirt over his head and discards it before helping Steve off with his own. Steve pulls off the rest of his clothes hurriedly and then lays on his side looking expectantly at the god as he takes himself in hand and begins to stroke his already swollen length.

“Why Steve, what did you have in mind?” The god teases causing Steve to blush.

“Well, uh, I was thinking, hoping I guess, that we could, uh, maybe…” he trails off unable to finish his thought as Loki pulls his own pants off revealing his arousal.

“I’m not sure this is the appropriate setting for what I feel you desire and I fear we are not adequately prepared.”

“What’s wrong with here?” Steve questions. “It’s peaceful and beautiful out here and I kinda did come prepared,” he continues as he reaches for the bag and pulls out the small bottle from Loki’s nightstand.

Loki purses his lips and lets out an exhale, “so you did.”

“I mean, its ok if you don’t want to do this,” Steve rushes to say.

With a slight quirk of his lips, Loki pulls Steve forward until he is positioned on top of the god, “oh I want, Steve, I definitely want.”

Steve’s breath leaves his body in a gasp when their bodies come into contact with each other. Loki pulls him down into a kiss as he runs his hands along the planes of Steve's back. When Steve moves to run his tongue across Loki's collar bone the god groans and rakes his nails down Steve's sides. With a hiss of pain, the soldier bites at Loki's neck leaving another mark on beautiful pale skin.

Reaching for the bottle of lube, Loki applies some liberally to his fingers. For just a moment there is a look of panic in Steve’s blue eyes before the god kisses him again, easing his nerves. He quickly flips them so that the blonde is underneath him. “Don’t worry love, I want to show you what to do. Just relax.”

Steve nods his head in agreement. Starting at his neck, Loki kisses down Steve’s body, stopping to run his tongue across one nipple and then the other. He continues down, placing light kisses along the blonde’s lower belly and across his hip. Steve gasps when Loki licks a stripe up the underside of his cock and then immediately takes his full length in his mouth. Loki hollows out his cheeks and slides back up until just the tip remains in his mouth. He flicks his tongue across the head and probes the slit which causes Steve to let out a long low moan.

Releasing Steve’s cock from his mouth, Loki bends both of Steve’s legs and plants his feet on the ground. When he is satisfied with the blonde's position he leans back in and takes half of him back in his mouth. He begins to move up and down the shaft, taking just a bit more each time as Steve's hands grasp and twist the blanket beneath them. When Loki brings his finger up to trail from his balls down to his puckered hole, the first soft touch causes Steve’s eyes to fly open. The god traces small circles around the bundle of nerves while he continues to work Steve’s cock with his mouth and tongue.
“Relax love, just feel,” the god instructs.

Steve releases his grip on the blanket and closes his eyes again working to relax his body. Loki moves his hand back up and caresses the soldiers testicles, fingers occasionally slipping down to dance across his perineum, but straying no further. Loki waits, continuing to work Steve’s cock with his mouth. He swallows, constricting his throat around the blonde causing him to instantly buck his hips. “Oh god.” Steve is writhing beneath him, hips making small thrusts and Loki knows he is close so he pulls off until he only has the head in his mouth. He swirls his tongue across sensitive skin until he finally hears it, “please Loki. Touch me. Just please touch me.”

Immediately Loki moves his finger down to circle Steve’s hole again, this time applying slight pressure. The blonde lets out a long moan as he is breached by another for the first time. With slow gentle movements the god works his finger deeper into his lover. He hollows his cheeks again and sucks Steve’s cock hard as he pushes his finger all the way in and begins to thrust it in and out slowly.

Arching his hips up off the ground, Steve comes with a cry as Loki struggles to swallow his seed.

Without warning Steve pushes Loki off and straddles his hips, so reminiscent of that first meeting in Stuttgart. The similarity is not lost on either man. The blonde smiles down at the god then leans in for a kiss. He moves to Loki’s side and guides the god to lay on his side. Steve moves to position himself behind the god pressing his chest tight against Loki’s back. He reaches behind himself and grabs the bottle of lube pouring a generous amount onto his fingers. Moving his top leg he uses it to slightly part Loki’s legs, then he tentatively trails his fingers down the cleft of the gods ass. He lightly brushes across the puckered hole before moving on to caress the base of his testicles. Steve lightly bites at Loki’s shoulder and he brings his fingers back to his entrance and mimics the circling motion the god had used on him. When Loki pushes back against his hand he bites down on the shoulder in front of him and pushes his finger in to the first knuckle. The god hisses and Steve immediately freezes, afraid he has hurt him. “Loki?” he questions uncertainly.

“Don’t you dare stop Steve,” the god demands.

The soldier begins to work his finger in and out of the gods body while Loki slowly rocks his hips with his movements. Gripping his cock, the god begins to lightly stroke.

“Another. Put in another,” he instructs. Steve pulls his hand away long enough to apply more lube then starts to work 2 fingers into the god. He takes his time being careful not to hurt his lover. When Loki has him add a third finger he is hard again and leaking pre come as he drags his cock along the crack of Loki’s ass. He can hardly think straight, the desire to be buried within the god is so great. He focuses on the feeling of Loki’s body against his, sucking and biting at the shoulder in front of him, both men rocking their hips, until finally, “Steve please, I need you. I’m ready.”

The blonde groans audibly as he withdraws his fingers and turns Loki onto his back. The god bends his knees as Steve applies more lubricant to his cock and then settles himself between his legs and positions his member at Loki’s entrance. “Look at me,” Loki tells him as Steve begins to slowly push in to the man’s body. It is hot and tight and complete and utter bliss as they become joined. Loki positions his legs over Steve’s thighs as the soldier leans forward to rest one hand on the ground near his lovers head. When he has himself under control, the blonde experimentally rolls his hips, which earns him a low moan from the god. He pulls out slightly and begins to slide back in, relishing the slow drag across his length. The men work to find a gentle rhythm, in no rush for this to end. Loki brings his hand up and begins to stroke his cock in time with Steve’s movements and it is so good. He can feel his release building and starts to work his hand faster. It only takes a few more strokes before he is coming hard, splattering both men with his spend.
When Steve feels the tightening of muscles around his cock he cannot hold back the spasms that overtake his body as he tips over the edge and collapses down onto the god. For a minute he doesn’t move as he allows his racing heart to calm. When he does lift his head, he looks directly into Loki’s smiling face. The god’s eyes are closed and he looks happier and more at peace than Steve has ever seen him. Once again Steve has to fight back the words that spring into his mind.

He slowly pulls out and lays down next to the god pulling his pliant body into his own, then he takes the edge of the blanket and wraps it over their bodies.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

We get to see a little more of why Loki is so scared of his relationship with Steve.

Chapter 18

Empire
Winery Dogs

(Tell me something)
Tell me something I'll believe
That you'll always stay with me
You and I forever we will be
(Tell me something)
That you're really what I see
Light up the night ignite my dreams
You give me hope and show me what life means
I still believe... I've learned a lot from you
Know when you leave this empire will fall to you
And I will follow through
(Tell me something)
That you'll never take me down
I'll carry you above the ground
I'm giving grace so you can wear my crown
(Tell me something)
You're the answer I have found
Everything is open now
And I'm surrendering to everything I ever thought of fighting over
I still believe... I've learned a lot from you
Know when you leave this empire will fall to you
And I will follow through
O' we made our life on trust and commitment
So we don't get lost along the way
This is our time, I know the search is over
This empire was made by you and me
(Now I'm wondering)
I'm wondering where it's gonna lead
Are we tied or are we free?
Heaven knows your power over me
(Now I'm wondering)
If you're trying to take me down
I don't know what I can do
Somehow I'm wondering, I'm wondering,
if this is still a safe place for my heart to be?
Would you lie to me?
Will you die for me when it's over?
I still believe... o' there's a lot to do
Know when you leave this empire will fall to you
And I will follow through... o' I owe it all to you
All that you see, this empire is all for you, and I will die for you

Day 87

Loki comes awake slowly, stretching his body and relishing the slight soreness that is a reminder of yesterdays activities. Steve is standing by the window looking out, a cup of coffee in his hand. “What are you thinking?” the god asks as he gets up and pads over to him.

Steve smiles and gives his love a quick kiss, “How simple it is here. So different from.... back there.”

Pressing his body against Steve’s, Loki rests his chin on his shoulder, wraps his arms around him and gazes out the window as well. “When I first woke up, from the ice, everything was so loud. So intense. It’s only been a few months, but I don’t know if I will ever get used to it. It was so much simpler when I was younger. I guess for someone raised during this time, it must be easy, but a lot has changed in the past 70 years and I didn’t have a chance to change with it.”

“Things were only simple when I was very young. As I got older, more and more was expected of a prince of Asgard. In many ways, Thor and I were sheltered in that we did not socialize outside of the palace. But we were also exposed to many things that most of our age were not. By the time I reached adolescence I was already a skilled negotiator and had brokered treaties between rival clans on several realms. One of the most important lessons I learned was to behave as though I knew what I was doing, even if I was utterly and totally baffled.” Loki grins as Steve twists in his arms to face him.

“I have a hard time imaging you baffled by anything,” the blonde teases.

“Surely you have noticed the lack of electronic devices here? I have no tolerance for such nonsense. All those ridiculous wires and remotes and flashing lights and beeping.”

Steve can’t help but laugh at the thought of Loki trying to install a TV. “Not all technology is bad. I mean the coffee maker is pretty nice,” he says gesturing to the device on the kitchen counter.

“Yes well, some exceptions have to be made in the interest of being a good host.”

Steve quirks an eyebrow at the god.

“I certainly don’t drink coffee,” Loki protests with a chuckle.

Day 88

Malekith is now certain that Loki is not within the walls of the Triskellion, but his search has not been in vain. He now knows that no one in this facility actually knows where Loki is hiding. He also knows that a few select people are actively searching for him and that Thor is working with Asgard’s gate keeper as well. He decides to bide his time. Let others do the work for him. He can wait until Loki has been found and while he waits, he can work on finding a weakness, something to
exploit for when he does show back up.

Day 89

“Just a few days ago you couldn’t wait to get up and get out of this bed, now all you want to do is lay here,” Loki teases as he relaxes next to the blonde.

“That’s not true. I want to do way more than just lay here,” Steve responds waggling his eyebrows.

“You’re ridiculous. You know that? It’s a good thing I like you.”

Steve grins at the god, “Oh? So you like me? Good, cuz I was starting to wonder.”

“I find you mildly amusing. At times,” Loki responds trying and failing to sound serious. He bursts out laughing when Steve pounces on him, pinning him to the bed. “Don’t you ever get tired?”

The blonde fixes him with a smoldering look, “I can do this all day.”

Day 90

Steve is sitting on the rock ledge in the water while Loki straddles his hips, legs wrapped around the blondes waist. Wrapping his fist in black hair, he turns the gods head and bites and sucks at the other mans neck. Loki has his fist around both of their cocks twisting his wrist and stroking up and down.

The blonde releases Loki’s neck and turns to plunge his tongue into the gods mouth. “You feel so good,” he moans between kisses. “I want you in every way.”

Loki’s breath hitches as he comes in his hand.

That is all it takes to send Steve over the edge as well and he comes with a groan, biting down on Loki’s shoulder.

Day 91

Steve’s eyes are locked on Loki’s face taking in the look of concentration on the god’s features. His eyes are closed, head turned to the side, mouth slightly open as he pants, hair hanging down around him in waves. In short, the man is gorgeous and the way he makes Steve feel as he moves, thrusting deeply within the blonde’s body is indescribable. Steve is in awe, watching the way Loki’s body moves, every action meant to bring the greatest pleasure to his partner. The sensation is almost overwhelming and when Loki changes his angle just a little, Steve’s eyes slam shut as he tries to bite down on the undignified resulting shout. The god only increases his pace in response as Steve pulls his legs in closer to his chest trying to draw Loki deeper. He is so very close. He brings one hand up by his head which Loki immediately grabs with his own, intertwining their fingers.

Steve wraps his legs around the god’s waist to keep him close as he finally tips over the edge, his seed spilling between them, coating both their chests. Loki grins at him triumphantly as Steve’s legs
fall back to the bed and begins to thrust in earnest against the blonde’s now pliant body. It only takes a half dozen more before the god is spilling deep within the soldiers body with a long low moan before pulling out and collapsing on the bed.

"I told you I could get you to come on my cock alone," Loki smirks as he catches his breath.

Steve only gives a wan smile in return as he stares unfocused at the ceiling. Loki notices immediately that something is off, "what's wrong love?" he asks, pulling Steve close.

"Nothing."

Loki turns his body to face the blonde, a small frown on his face, "tell me."

Breathing out a sigh Steve responds, "you're so.... I can't......" he pauses, trying to arrange his thoughts. "How am I supposed to please you? I don't know what I'm doing. You make me feel so good, the things you do to me, the way you touch me and I feel like I'm fumbling around because I'm so inexperienced."

Loki moves so his chin is resting on Steve’s chest. "You have to know that you please me." Steve rolls his eyes in response. "You do. What you may lack in experience you more than make up for in raw skill and enthusiasm-"

"Loki-"

"No. Listen to me. You please me. You touch me and my body reacts. If I could, I would never let you leave my bed. You make me feel cared for in a way that I never have before."

"Cared for.... thats nice, I guess, but you make me feel so amazing. You know so much. Your other partners-"

"My other..... Ok," Loki says as he rolls to his side and sits up against the head board pulling the discarded blanket over his lap. "Come here," he tells the blonde as he gently pulls at his arm. Steve moves to lay his head on Loki's lap and the god automatically starts to run his fingers through his hair.

"I had a close friend growing up. She was one of the very few who knew of my attraction to men. We had an arrangement where we pretended to be together and no one would question me. It worked for both of us for several years. During this time I became quite enamored with a young nobleman, but my attempts at courtship were rebuffed. I spent a rather depressed night drinking too much with my friend. We wound up in my chambers and she kissed me. Under any other circumstances I would have taken her home and that would have been the end of it, but I was heartbroken and vulnerable, so I went with it.

"It was my first time, with male or female and we were drunk. I guess it must have been ok for her, but when she called out Thor's name I couldn't continue. I stopped and she didn't even notice. When she was asleep I took her home. She didn't really speak to me after that, too awkward I suppose. I guess I should be happy she continued to keep my secret.

"After that I had a brief dalliance with a young soldier in Odin’s army. It was always rushed and quick. The fear of being caught always lurking. He was killed in battle. I wasn't able to publicly mourn him as no one knew of our relationship, but I attended his memorial on behalf of the royal family. I was dismayed to find that he had a wife, children, an entire life that didn’t include me. I don’t think I loved him, but I could have and I felt betrayed.

"When I got older I became involved with a man from Alfheim. He was nice enough, I suppose, but
he made it very clear that our relationship was merely a matter of convenience. When we were together in that way, he would direct me in what he wanted, tell me what to do. There was no emotional connection and it was always about him. My pleasure was incidental at best. I had thought, hoped really, that eventually he would grow to care about me, he grew tired of me and cast me aside for another."

Loki takes in a shaky breath, fingers still working through Steve’s hair. He stops himself from telling Steve about Elgin. The trauma of what happened on Vanahheim still too fresh. "So yes, I know what feels good in general. I have a litany of techniques that mean absolutely nothing without the right partner. And maybe you don’t know what I like, but I hardly do myself. We are learning and exploring each other in a way that is so much more pleasurable and satisfying than anything I have ever experienced." When Steve doesn’t respond Loki prompts, "do you understand?"

Steve lifts himself up so he can draw the god into a deep kiss. "I want to make you feel good Loki. Let me do this for you," he whispers against his lovers mouth before kissing him again. Loki nods in response as Steve’s hands begin to caress his body.

Later as Steve holds Loki close, idly running his fingers up and down the gods arm, he feels Loki shudder against him. He pulls the god closer to his own body and places a kiss to his temple. "What are you thinking?"

Loki is close to sleep and doesn’t stop to sensor his thoughts before speaking, "wondering when you will leave and this will all end."

Steve frowns, but the god is already asleep before he can respond.

Day 92

Loki is sitting with his back against a tree while Steve sits on a log nearby sketching.

“I’m really gonna miss this place when we go back. Maybe we can visit sometimes,” Steve remarks casually. Not looking up from his drawing, he misses the frown that flits across Loki’s features. “I’m not sure what I’m going to miss most. The quiet, the forest, the pond. Probably the cabin itself,” Steve continues. “I mean its not much bigger than my apartment, but it….. What’s wrong?” He asks when he finally looks up at Loki.

“Nothing,” Loki lies as he tries to slow down his pounding heart. He can feel it, the fear coiled in his belly, just waiting to overtake him.

With a sigh, Steve closes his sketchbook and hops down from the log to kneel on the ground next to the god. “I know something is bothering you, so what is it? Did I say something wrong?”

Loki scowls for just the briefest moment before schooling his features into a blank canvas. “I don’t understand why you are in such a hurry to go back. Is it so much better there?"

“Of course you do,” the god spits jumping to his feet and stalking several steps away. “Can’t have Captain America shacked up in the woods with someone like me. And Odin forbid Steve Rogers be
“Loki, where is this coming from?” Steve pleads as he follows after his lover. Echoes of Loki’s words from the night before in his head.

“You say you want to be more than Captain America, but you can’t wait to run back and be him.”

“No! That’s not it. Loki, just listen to me…”

“Listen to what? Listen to you tell me how you wish you could stay? Go ahead say it! Let me hear the lie from your own lips Captain.”

Steve is shocked into silence and stands gaping at the god before him. “I always knew, it was just a matter of time. I really thought I could be enough for you. For Steve Rogers. I was a fool.” The god can hear the near panic settling into his voice, but is unable to stop it. He curses himself for feeling so vulnerable.

“If I were only Steve Rogers we wouldn’t even be having this conversation!”

“Because Steve Rogers would stay, but Captain America can’t? Is that it?”

“No, because if I weren’t Captain America and you weren’t trying to take over Earth, we would have never even met.” Steve knows that was the wrong thing to say as soon as it leaves his mouth, but it’s too late and he can’t take it back now. “Loki, I’m sorry…” he begins, but before he can get any further, the god has vanished.

Loki appears in his mother’s gardens on Asgard. He is disappointed to find her usual spot empty and has to stifle the feeling of abandonment that tries to overwhelm him. He knows it is foolish, his mother didn’t know he was coming, but he can’t help it. He sits on the bench and tries not to think about Steve. After a while he changes his appearance into that of a chambermaid and enters the palace in search of Queen Frigga.

He finds her in the sitting room off her chamber. She is having tea with a young lady whom Loki does not recognize, but when she sees him standing in the open doorway, the Queen smiles brightly. “Excuse me Gilda, it would seem time has gotten away from me. I would like to finish our conversation tomorrow? At the same time?” the Queen asks.

“Oh of course your majesty,” Gilda smiles as she stands and curtsies, before leaving the room. As soon as she is out of earshot Loki enters the sitting room and closes the door behind himself as he drops the illusion. He stands awkwardly, twisting his hands together, feeling suddenly foolish for running to his mother.

“Come, sit,” Frigga says as she gestures to the chair beside herself.

Instead, Loki moves to look out the window.

“What troubles you Loki?” She asks as she rises to stand next to him.

“Does something have to be wrong for me to visit my Queen?”

“No, I always enjoy your visits, but I am not so old that I cannot tell when my child is troubled,” the Queen chides.

“I promised to return when I had more time,” he answers, forcing a smile on his face.
Frigga is not fooled for a moment, but opts to let it go for now. “Thor has returned the tesseract. It is secure.”

“Thank you mother.”

She reaches out and covers his hand with her own as it rests on the window sill. “Will you at least indulge an old woman and tell me what you have been up to?”

With a small smile Loki tells her, “I have been helping a….friend. He was injured recently, almost healed though and will be ready to go home.”

“And you wish for this friend to stay with you?” she ventures.

“I have grown somewhat fond of him,” he admits after a moment. “But he has responsibilities that he cannot get away from.”

“You fear that once he leaves, he will not return to you?”

“Yes,” the god whispers.

“Has he given you reason to believe that your…..friendship will end once he leaves?”

“It is a complicated situation. His companions do not approve of our association and he has responsibilities that he must see to.”

“Hmmmm…..You think he will choose his companions and his responsibilities over his relationship with you?”

“Yes,” Loki chokes out. “He is a man of honor and I am….what I am.”

“And what is that Loki?”

“Monster, murderer, destroyer, damaged, undesirable. I went to him for help so I could try to be something more than that. I didn’t want this to happen and I don’t want to lose him, but part of me thinks its best to let him go. Save myself the pain.”

“Do you know what I see when I look at you?” She doesn’t wait for her son to answer, “I see a handsome young man with a brilliant mind and a sensitive heart.” She pulls him into an embrace, running her hand soothingly up and down his back, “give him a chance Loki. We don’t know what the future holds. He may yet surprise you.”

“I want to believe, but I don’t know if I can stand to be hurt like that again.”

“He is not Tyre, nor is he Jarin.” Loki flinches at the names of his former lovers, even while feeling grateful that she didn’t mention Elgin. “He is not Odin and he is not Thor. A path has been placed before you, if you are brave enough to follow it. You have a choice Loki, to allow your past hurts to control your future or to take a chance. Yes, there is the risk that you will be hurt again, but sometimes its worth the risk.”
Chapter 19

Remember

Colours

Our bed…
I watch you change in front of me
My head…
Is filled up with things you do to me
Your skin—made in my dreams, a fantasy
I breathe for the last time it seems
When I hear you speak
I remember the time when I
I was alive the night
Of you and I
Remember the time of you and I
Your eyes…
Screaming my name, it’s all I hear
Your legs…
They wrap around me, and now I feel
I stop… and start and stop and start
I love hearing you breathe
In time with my heart
I remember the time when I
I was alive the night
Of you and I
Remember the time of you and I
I saw you and you changed my mind
Thought that I found all I need to find
You always made it all alright
We made it good
You and I
I remember the time when I
I was alive the night
Of you and I

Day 93

Malekith watches the man with the ridiculous facial hair enter the office of the man with one eye. He has learned that the man with the facial hair is working to find Loki. He waits inside the office, hidden in shadow and magic, listening to the constant babble that streams from his mouth, hoping to hear something useful. When the man stands to leave, the dark elf follows him to the lower levels.
where the man gets in some type of vehicle and prepares to leave again. Quickly, he works a spell designed to help him track the vehicle.

Steve is sitting by the fireplace when Loki appears in the living room. As soon as he see’s the god he is on his feet. He pulls Loki into an embrace, “Thank god, I was so worried. I didn’t know where you went. I’m sorry for what I said.”

“Its ok Steve. I know you were never meant to stay here, all things must end. I think for now, we should focus on the time we have left here.”

The blonde isn’t sure he likes what Loki is telling him. It doesn’t sit right with him. “I’m not like the others Loki, I won’t abandon you.”

“I know you believe that. Just like I know it wouldn’t be intentional.” Loki holds up a hand to stop Steve from interrupting, “You are a good man Steve Rogers. More than I deserve. “

“Please don’t do that.”

“Do what?”

“I will have to leave here Loki, but that doesn’t mean I will leave you. Its not the same.”

“Isn’t it?”

“No its not. And I would appreciate it if you would stop treating me like I’m one of those jerks from your past. That’s not me. I want to be with you. I thought you understood that.”

“Sometimes what we want to do and what we have to do are not the same,” Loki responds.

“You’re right. Sometimes we have to do our duty. You’re a prince, I’m sure you can understand that.” Steve sits back on the chair and puts his head in his hands. “Look, can we not fight about this anymore? Please. We’ll figure out a way. That’s what we are supposed to be doing right? Changing your fate? We’ll just figure this out too.” Steve stands and holds out his hand for the god to take.

Loki wants to believe. He wants to have faith that they will figure a way to make this work, that Steve won’t leave him, that Steve’s teammates will accept him, that his past relationship failures haven’t scarred him too much, and so he takes Steve’s hand in his and resolves to at least try to enjoy what time they have together. Its okay. He hasn’t asked to go back yet. Maybe I can show him. Maybe I can be enough. Just for once.

Day 94

Steve is sitting back against the headboard with his legs stretched out in front of him when Loki gets on the bed and sits straddling the blondes thighs. He sits for a moment just looking at the man and his heart aches a little knowing that this cannot last, but he pushes those thoughts away and leans in to kiss Steve’s lips. Gently and lovingly he tries to convey his feelings without words. Loki pulls away and dips his head down and kisses Steve’s shoulder and flicks out his tongue against warm skin. He has a slight smile on his face as he hears his lover groan.

He kisses close to Steve’s neck and nips at his skin causing the blonde to jerk his shoulder up in surprise with a gasp. Loki pulls back to look at Steve’s face and pushes his shoulder down as he
leans back in and mouths the golden skin. He pulls back just enough to look at Steve’s face again. The blonde has his head back against the head board with his eyes closed, lips slightly parted.

Loki leans back in and licks at the curve of the shoulder to neck. Steve’s shoulder rises again and once again Loki pulls back. "Stop flinching," he admonishes.

"I'm not."

Loki immediately leans back in and places his mouth on Steve's neck and sucks. This time Steve lowers his head and raises his shoulder. "Oh? Now stop flinching," Loki tells him again.

"I'm not. I swear. It's just... you're giving me chills when you do that," Steve pants a little breathlessly.

"You do not like it?" Loki asks uncertainly.

"No that's not it, I like it. A lot actually."

"Ok then," the god responds as he leans in to kiss Steve’s lips. The kisses are soft but quickly deepen as he opens his mouth and brush's his tongue across the soldiers mouth. Immediately Steve responds by opening his own mouth. The blonde kisses down Loki's jaw and pulls his earlobe into his mouth. Then he places soft kisses along Loki's neck. The god turns his head to expose more of his neck while at the same time he dips his head down to mouth along Steve shoulder again.

He can feel Steve’s muscles tighten under his tongue as he fights the urge to move again. Loki lets out a little laugh as Steve’s shoulder moves up just slightly and decides to move his attentions elsewhere, filing away the information for later.

Loki shifts farther down Steve’s legs so he is now sitting close to his knees. He leans in and kisses Steve again pushing his tongue forcefully into the other man's mouth. He is not gentle as he grips the hair at the back of the blondes head and pulls back. Steve’s eyes are closed and he is panting, mouth slightly open, face flushed. He looks stunning like this.

After a moment Steve slightly opens his eyes and leans forward hands reaching up to card through Loki's black tresses. "Loki....."

"Shhhhh..... " Loki soothes as he places a palm against Steve’s bare chest to push him back against the head board. He leans in and kisses him again then trails kisses down his jaw line. Then he lowers his head and licks a stripe up the center of Steve’s chest causing him to groan again. Dropping further down, he explores Steve’s abs with his lips and tongue then raises up to lick across a nipple which elicits a groan from his lover. Smiling to himself, he lifts his hips and scoots further down the bed and pulls the blanket off of Steve’s lap. Tossing it aside he runs his fingers across the hard outline of the other man’s cock through his boxers. Then he lowers down to kiss his abdomen just above the waistline of his boxers. He can feel Steve’s muscles tensing and releasing in anticipation as he breathes across the fabric over his straining erection. Loki raises up again and runs his fingers just inside the waistband and pulls slightly. Steve helpfully lifts his hips so they can be pulled down while Loki moves just long enough to get them all the way off. Loki nudges Steve’s legs apart and kneels between his shins. The blonde sits staring at the god, hands limp at his sides, chest heaving slightly.

Loki lowers his head and licks the side of his lovers cock then again across the tip. Steve gasps and grips the sheets tightly on either side as Loki takes the full length into his mouth. He slides down until he can feel the tip at the back of his throat and then swallows. The sensation of Loki's throat constricting around his cock almost sends Steve over the edge right then. Sensing this, Loki backs off and begins to trace small patterns on the sensitive skin with his tongue.
Steve reaches up and wraps his fist in Loki’s hair as the god takes him in his mouth again. He raises up until his lips are wrapped around just the head then sucks. He can feel the pressure as Steve pushes down on his head and so he allows Steve to control the pace, only altering the tightness and suction around his engorged member. The next time Steve pushes his head down he pauses and swallows again then moans loudly knowing Steve will be able to feel it.

Loki pulls off Steve’s cock and begins to stroke along his length as he gazes up at the blonde through his eyelashes, "I want you to come for me."

"Yes, please, I want it," Steve replies breathlessly.

Loki slides his hand down to the base of Steve’s cock and then takes the rest in his mouth moving up and down quickly.

"Almost..... thats it.... ahhh.... almost...." Steve moans.

Loki resumes stroking his length as Steve begins a constant stream of moaning and pleading. "Please... I'm almost... oh god...."

Loki licks just across the head and then goes back to stroking as Steve’s hips jerk up, body twisting in pleasure bordering on agony as he comes across Loki's chest.

Loki works his cock through it until Steve collapses bonelessly back against the headboard. The god moves forward to gently kiss his lips then gets up and goes into the bathroom to wash up and bring Steve a wet cloth.

Day 95

“I’m really worried,” Tony says.

He is standing in his lab with Clint, Bruce and Natasha looking over the results from the facial recognition scans that he ran. "I can’t find a trace of them anywhere. What if he took Steve off planet? What if he’s dead?"

“It’s only been a month, I’m sure he’s fine,” Bruce answers trying to reassure the group.

“Yes! A month! Do you have any idea what could have happened in a month?” Tony shouts.

Natasha finally speaks up trying to calm the situation, “there hasn’t been any incidents that look like Loki’s handy work. I think he is just laying low.”

“For what? He has to be planning something. A guy like that doesn’t just take a vacation. And you know if Cap could have come back he would have,” Tony retorts.

“Are you so sure about that?” Bruce interjects. “Steve hasn’t been out of the ice all that long. He may have seemed ok, but I have to think all these changes are hard on him. And I really don’t think Loki took him to hurt him. He doesn’t come across as that kind of guy. At least not with Steve.”

“Tell that to the people he killed,” Clint growls.

Bruce frowns at the archer, “I’m not saying he’s a great guy. And I’m not saying we shouldn’t be looking for Steve. All I’m saying is that thinking the worst is not getting us anywhere. Maybe we need to be looking for something else.”
“Like what?” Natasha asks, calm as ever.

“I don’t know. Does Steve have any other friends? Hobbies? What about his apartment? If he were somewhere with Loki and he was there willingly would there be something from there he would want to have with him?”

Bruce can see Tony’s mind working overtime as he begins to pace and speak, “he had his shield with him so that’s out. I think I need to take a look at his apartment. Find out who he talked to before and figure out where he spent his time. There has to be something.”

“I’ve got a couple of ideas,” Natasha says. “Steve is a sucker for this little deli in New York. Had food brought in special a couple of times. I’ll check there and see if anyone has seen them. It’s a long shot, but worth a try. Tony think you can get into the Smithsonian’s security feed? He spent a lot of time there when he first came out the ice.”

“Yeah, I’ll get Jarvis on it.”

Tony lets himself into Steve’s apartment. He walks around the small space marveling at how a man would choose to live in such a place. It is positively dull and sparse. It doesn’t take Tony long to look around and so he places the scanning device he brought with him on a bookshelf out of sight and leaves.

Day 96

Loki is dozing lightly while Steve moves about in the kitchen getting himself a glass of water. He pauses on his way back to bed to admire the form of other man, what little he can see of it anyway.

"I can feel you looking at me," comes Loki's voice from beneath the pile of blankets.

Steve chuckles softly and slips back into the bed as he begins to unravel the heap of blankets so he can get to his lover. "I don't understand how you can sleep under all these covers."

"I'll have you know it's quite cozy under here."

"Oh really," Steve grins when he finally gets to the bottom of the pile and snuggles in close to the god. "Yeah, ok, I guess it's alright," he agrees as he leans in to kiss the god lightly. "Although I think it may get a little too hot to be underneath all these blankets soon."

Loki quirks an eyebrow at the blonde, "oh?"

"Yes, definitely going to be too hot."

"What did you have in mind?" the god purrs.

Steve grins mischievously, "I thought we might check the structural integrity of this bed."

"Oh?" is all Loki can say again as his breath quickens.

"Yeah, and maybe of that chair," Steve adds jerking his head in that general direction. "And maybe the kitchen counter."

"Sounds ambitious."
"I do like to aim high," Steve laughs as he raises up to his knees and yanks all the blankets off the bed and deposits them on the floor.

2 hours later they lay in a tangle of limbs on the floor, both trying to catch their breath when Steve starts to giggle uncontrollably.

"What is so funny?"

"I guess I owe you a new chair," the blonde manages to get out before devolving into a fit of laughter.

"I'm pretty sure there's also a hole in the wall behind the headboard and don't get me started on what you did to my kitchen," Loki pouts before he breaks out into a grin of his own.

Day 97

Hidden in shadows, Malekith has managed to infiltrate the glass behemoth that gaudily declares itself Stark Tower. He watches and he listens. He now has a name for the man with the shield that was fighting along side Loki. It would seem they are both missing and it stands to reason they will be together.

Day 98

Steve is on his back on the bed. His eyes are closed, faced flushed and he is painfully erect. He tries to keep his breathing even and to keep his hips still, but the effort is proving too much. He almost sighs in relief when Loki lowers himself down onto the bed to grind their hips together. Loki lowers his head down to growl into Steve’s ear, "you were meant for this. To feel indescribable pleasure at my hands. I will make you tremble with desire and scream my name as you spill over and over again. I will have you in every way."

"Loki..." Steve pants "please.... I need...I need...."

Loki grins and kisses Steve fiercely as he works his hand between their bodies and grips his cock. 2 firm strokes are all it takes for the soldier to become completely undone with the god's name on his lips.

Loki hums happily as he looks Steve over. After several moments the blonde cracks open an eye and blushes again when he sees Loki looking at him so intently.

Loki grins again and gives Steve a quick peck on the lips as he climbs off the bed and walks over to the dresser to retrieve a pair of boxers for the blond.

The soldier is on him in an instant, spinning the god around to slam his back into the wall. Loki doesn't have time to catch his breath before Steve pushes his tongue into his mouth.

The kiss is brutal and harsh. Nothing like Loki expects from Steve and over all too soon as the blond moves his mouth to Loki’s throat. He uses his hands to move Loki’s head to expose more of his pale
neck and bites down forcing a cry from the god's lips. *He's not hurting you. Not Steve. Don’t panic*...

Loki reaches up to wrap his arms around Steve, but the soldier stops him by pushing both slender wrists against the wall. When the god tries again Steve grabs both wrists and pins them above his head while he works the fastener on the god's slacks with his other hand. "Do. Not. Move," the soldier commands.

When Loki doesn't respond Steve squeezes the god's wrists, "do you understand?"

Loki only nods his head unable to articulate a verbal response as his lover slowly slides down to his knees dragging Loki's slacks down as he goes. Steve is not surprised to see the god is not wearing under garments as he takes his length in his hands and gives a couple of light strokes. Loki closes his eyes with a hiss but they fly back open when he feels the warmth of Steve’s mouth engulf him.

"Steve....your mouth....ahhhhh," Loki murmurs as he watches Steve pull back and then engulf his cock again. This is new. Never has a lover done this for him, for his pleasure alone. Steve pulls off again and runs his tongue over the slit and swirls around the head before taking him in fully once more. Steve has his eyes closed, focus solely on making Loki feel good as he begins to move his head in earnest.

When Steve hollows out his cheeks and sucks as he pulls back Loki cannot resist reaching his hand out and gripping the hair at the top of Steve's head. Steve begins to stroke the god's shaft as he gazes up at Loki from his position on his knees. He turns his eyes back to Loki's cock and takes it in his mouth again causing Loki's grip to tighten in his hair. It hurts, but Steve doesn't care. In fact he loves it, knowing he is the one making Loki react like this.

The god knows he is close and when he sees Steve’s cock is hard again he feels the tightening in his belly signaling his impending release. "Touch yourself," he begs and Steve immediately moves to comply, gripping his cock and taking short strokes while he continues to work the god with his mouth. Loki lets out a whimper at the sight. "So close..... Steve...... Steve.....," Loki pants, "that's it, touch yourself."

When Steve moans around his cock, Loki is done for. "Look at me!" he demands as he begins to ejaculate. Steve holds the base of Loki's cock as he swallows his seed, never breaking eye contact, while he uses his other hand to push himself over the edge as well.

Day 99

Steve is laying with his head on Loki's chest listening to his heart beat as the sweat from their lovemaking dries on their skin. He traces patterns with his fingertips along the pale skin he loves so much. This feeling of calm relaxation has him on the verge of sleep. Loki's hand caressing his muscled back only adds to the pull and his eyes drift closed of their own accord.

Loki can tell the moment Steve has fallen asleep. His face takes on a beautiful innocence that is not present while awake and while Loki finds the Captain extremely attractive at all times, these moments are Loki's favorite, seeing his lover sated and happy, relaxed and completely at ease. These moments of peace are not plentiful for either man, both so accustomed to war. Loki can feel the pull of sleep dragging him down and so he presses a kiss to the top of Steve’s head and then allows himself to be lulled into sleep.
Day 100

Malekith hovers just outside the common room on one of the numerous floors of Stark Tower. He listens to the woman called Widow reporting her latest failure to locate Loki and “Steve”. He himself has no way of locating Loki so he is resigned to allowing the so called “Avengers” do the work for him.

Chapter End Notes

There is a companion piece over in the First of Many. Chapter 6 What Dreams May Come.
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Steve eventually has to go back......

Chapter Notes

Please refer to the story tags for potential triggers before reading this chapter. We get a little more information about Loki's past with Elgin, not much, but enough to draw some conclusions.

Chapter 20

Love Bites

Def Leppard

If you've got love in your sights
Watch out, love bites
When you make love, do you look in the mirror?
Who do you think of, does he look like me?
Do you tell lies and say that it's forever?
Do you think twice, or just touch 'n' see?
When you're alone, do you let go?
Are you wild 'n' willin' or is it just for show?
I don't wanna touch you too much baby
'Cos making love to you might drive me crazy
I know you think that love is the way you make it
So I don't wanna be there when you decide to break it
Love bites, love bleeds
It's bringin' me to my knees
Love lives, love dies
It's no surprise
Love begs, love pleads
It's what I need
When I'm with you are you somewhere else?
Am I gettin' thru or do you please yourself?
When you wake up will you walk out?
It can't be love if you throw it about
I don't wanna touch you too much baby
'Cos making love to you might drive me crazy
Love bites, love bleeds
It's bringin' me to my knees
Love lives, love dies

Day 101

Steve has been acting off all day. Loki can tell something is on the soldiers mind, but he is afraid to push, so he waits pensively knowing Steve will speak when he is ready. After they have dinner, he finally speaks his mind.

“Loki, I can’t stay here. I have to go back.”

The god is hurt, but not surprised, they all leave in the end. He knew this day was coming and yet hearing Steve say it still leaves him feeling winded and empty and weak. The reaction is instantaneous and intense and so he lashes out even though it is the wrong thing to do.

“Oh, of course. You need to get back. Duty calls and what not,” he hisses and his heart starts to pound.

“Loki please…”

“No its fine Captain. I understand. You have no further need of me and so now you wish to return to your friends,” Loki sneers at him turning away to hide the way his eyes are starting to moisten. He knows he is being selfish, knows he is being unreasonable, but in a moment all of his fears and insecurities are once again brought to the surface.

“No, that’s not it. I just can’t stay here….”

Again Loki cuts him off, “you’re right, you can’t stay here, not with the monster, the villain. Its time for you to go back to your friends.” The last is said with such venom that Steve flinches back for a moment.

“Loki, you are my friend too.”

Immediately Steve knows that was the wrong thing to say even before Loki utters a sharp laugh, “is that what we are Captain? Friends?”

In an instant Steve closes the distance between them and pulls Loki into a heated kiss. He kisses Loki hard and pushes his tongue into his mouth as he brings his hand up to bury it into his dark hair. He pulls hard on his hair to break the kiss and focuses on Loki’s eyes making sure he has his full attention before he begins again.

“Yes Loki, you are my friend. “ He holds up a finger to silence him before Loki can interrupt him again. “But you know damn well that we are more than that. We talked about this. I thought you understood. I thought you knew what it meant when I gave myself to you.” Steve’s voice is softer almost pleading.

Loki crushes down that little spark of hope that threatens to ignite. Hope is what leads to hurt and he just cannot take anymore. He can no longer bring himself to look at Steve. He knows he should not have lashed out due to his fear. His issues are not Steve’s fault, but his first reaction has always been anger. Like a familiar set of armor, anger keeps the doubt and pain away, keeps him safe. And he just wants to feel safe, fates be damned. He turns away from Steve again and quietly says, “I will send you back.”
Steve looks down and sighs, feeling defeated. How can he protect Loki and help change his fate if he can’t even get through this conversation. “if that’s what you want Loki.”

“No Captain, that’s what you want.”

Steve looks up at Loki again, “Damn it Loki. I don’t want to leave you. I want you to come with me. You asked me to change your fate, well I can’t do it from here and I’m not doing it without you! And stop with the Captain crap. Its Steve. Its always been Steve.”

Loki is stunned into silence. The Silver Tongue has nothing to say. Instead he busies his hands by picking up items off the counter, examining them and replacing them. Steve takes the cup that Loki is currently holding out of his hand and sets it down, then leads him by the hand to the bed. He kisses Loki’s lips tenderly, then places soft kisses on each eyelid. He lifts each hand in turn and kisses his fingertips.

Loki so badly wants to give in to Steve’s touch, wants so badly to let this happen, but his treacherous mind just won’t let him have this moment of happiness.

“And when we get back? What will you tell your friends? How will you explain why you have been gone so long?”

Steve reaches up to brush a lock of hair out of Loki’s eyes and to caress his cheek with the back of his hand. “I will tell them that I had to heal. I will tell them the truth, that once I was healed I needed to stay longer. And I will tell them I needed to be with my friend, my lover, my everything.”

“And you really think they will just accept that? They will accept us?”

"I would hope so, but it really doesn’t matter if they do or not. Loki I lov-"

"Don’t! Don’t say it. Please Steve. Just...... don’t." Did you think I meant it when I said I loved you? No one will ever love you. Loki can feel Elgin’s hot breath on his neck. He squeezes his eyes shut trying to block out the pain radiating from where Elgin is abusing his body. The binders rub the skin on his wrists raw as he works to get them off. Worthless. No good for anything except this.

Steve frowns as he watches a tear slide down Loki’s face. Reaching up he brushes his thumb across the gods cheek, then he leans in and brushes a kiss across his lips.

Loki squeezes his eyes shut and pulls Steve into a desperate kiss trying to push the memories away for just a little longer. He holds the sides of the blondes face only releasing him when he steps back.

“Its going to be ok. You know that right?” Steve asks. “I mean it Loki. I’ll find a way.” When Loki doesn’t respond Steve continues, “you believe me right?”

With a sigh Loki tells him, “What I believe is hardly relevant.”

Steve frowns again, but chooses not to address the gods statement. Instead he takes Loki’s hand and pulls him close again, wrapping his arms around the slimmer man. He breathes in Loki’s scent. “Let me make love to you,” he pleads.

The god nods his head and steps back to the bed where he grabs the hem of his shirt and begins to pull it up. Steve stills his hands, “let me do that.”

Gently he twines the fingers of his left hand into Loki’s hair pulling him in so their bodies are flush together. He kisses along Loki’s jaw line down to his ear and then continues lower until he is impeded by the collar of the gods shirt. Only then does he pull back and lift the shirt over Loki’s
head. Steve presses forward with partially parted lips and gently kisses his lover. He runs his hands up and down Loki’s back, feeling every muscle under the soft pale skin on the man that he loves. The blonde deepens the kiss, slowly moving his tongue to brush across the gods.

He moves his right hand down and works the fastener and zipper on Loki’s pants open then glides his hand between fabric and skin to softly caress the firm flesh of the gods ass, never breaking contact with Loki’s warm lips.

Pulling his hand back he sinks to his knees and lifts one foot and then the other to remove his lovers shoes and socks, then he reaches both hands up and uses his fingers to glide Loki’s pants down where he again lifts his feet to remove the last of his clothing.

“You are so beautiful, so perfect. I would worship every inch of you,” he whispers reverently before leaning in and taking the god in his mouth.

Loki closes his eyes allowing himself to feel his lover’s mouth, Steve’s hands lightly touching his thighs, roaming across his skin. He is gentle and loving and everything Loki has ever dreamed of and the god’s heart breaks just a little more knowing it cannot be. He curses himself for letting it come to this. Berates himself for ever setting foot on that helicarrier. Is disappointed in himself for ever even considering the idea of being with Steve this way. Is disgusted with himself for being so weak, so needy. But most of all he hates himself, for what he feels, for who he is, for what he is, for being such a fool and for trusting the fates to be something other than cruel to him.

These past few weeks have had nothing to do with working with Steve to change his fate. It has been selfish and childish, wanting something not meant for him and when he comes in that perfect mouth, Steve works him through it with gentle caresses and soft words that he doesn’t deserve.

When he opens his eyes Steve is standing in front of him with a soft smile on his perfect lips. The blonde reaches up and caresses his lovers cheek then guides him to lay on his back on the bed. Loki watches as the blonde removes his own clothing and then Steve lays on his side facing Loki as he traces his hand along the plains of Loki’s chest and abdomen. Leaning in he brings his hand up and gently grips the side of Loki’s face for a kiss.

Steve shifts his body so he can continue to caress the flesh he loves with his hand, while he begins to slowly work himself open with the lubricant from the nightstand with the other. To make it easier he shifts one leg over Loki’s. This also has the added benefit of bringing his own erection into contact with Loki’s thigh, giving him some much needed friction as he slowly moves his hips while he uses his fingers to continue to prepare himself.

Steve rises to his knees and quickly applies lubricant to Loki’s re awakened cock before moving to straddle the god. He locks eyes with the god and then carefully he guides Loki into his body. Slowly he begins to push down completing the union. When he is fully seated, Steve exhales and smiles. This position is new for them. The blonde is reminded of their first meeting in Stuttgart and how that battle ended in a very similar position.

Loki grips Steve’s thighs when the blonde begins to move. When Steve rolls his hips just so, Loki slams his eyes closed. “Look at me,” Steve insists, his voice low and rough with arousal.

Shifting his hand Loki grips Steve’s cock and begins to stroke him, but the blonde shakes his head and grabs both of Loki’s hands with his own and intertwines their fingers bringing them up by either side of the gods head. This new angle brings Steve’s body lower, trapping his cock between them providing all the friction he needs. He undulates his hips coaxing small moans from his lover. His hips jerk involuntarily when Loki begins to add his own thrusts and glides against that spot inside him. The urge to close his eyes is almost overwhelming, but Steve is determined to not miss a single
second of this moment, this perfect moment.

They both keep their movements slow and small and it is enough, all they need. Steve comes first, mouth falling open, but never breaking eye contact. Loki watches his lover come undone and it is exquisite, he is so beautiful, as Steve’s eyes finally fall closed.

Loki lets out a sob as he comes, his eyes burn as he tries to hold back his tears. Steve’s eyes immediately snap open, “Loki?” The god turns his head to the side avoiding his lover’s gaze. "Loki look at me. What’s wrong?"

Still refusing to look at him Loki responds, “its nothing.”

“Its not nothing. You’re crying….we just….and you’re crying. That’s….god Loki,” he says as he moves to lay beside the god pulling his body in close to his own.

“I’m fine, just overwhelmed that’s all.”

“Are you sure?” Steve questions, unsure of Loki’s answer.

“I’m sure. This whole thing has me feeling wrong footed is all. We will talk in the morning, make plans, figure this out.”

“It’ll work out. You’ll see. We’ll go back and it will be all ok.”

“Sleep Steve,” Loki whispers as he works an enchantment to aid that endeavor.

The soldier squeezes Loki tighter, “I love you.” He is not quite awake enough to register the gods lack of response or to see the tears that track down his face.
Chapter Notes

Oohhh Steve......

Chapter 21

Alone
I Prevail

We used to have it all
It was us against the world, but now
I’ve been sleeping on my own
Spending all these nights alone knowing you’re not coming home
Cause you’re running through my dreams
It’s like you’re on repeat
Feels like eternity, and I can’t believe
I let you in, you left me out
You left me on my own, you left me all alone
I let you in, you bled me out
You left me skin and bone, you left me all alone
I would’ve gave it all
Truth be told I can’t believe you’re gone
Like a dream I can’t recall
Now I gotta face the fact that you’re never coming back
Cause you’re running through my dreams
It’s like you’re on repeat
Feels like eternity, and I can’t believe
I let you in, you left me out
You left me on my own, you left me all alone
I let you in, you bled me out
You left me skin and bone, you left me all alone
You used to run, run through my veins
And to be honest, I know I’ll never be the same
I let you in, you left me out
You left me on my own, you left me all alone
I see you in my dreams
I can’t believe you’re gone
When it’s too dark to see
I’ll leave the light on
Day 102

When Steve comes awake he knows something is not right even before he opens his eyes. He throws off the blanket and lurches to a sitting position gazing around his small apartment. His heart is pounding and his stomach clenches unpleasantly. The place isn't big and so he doesn't need to get up to know he is alone. Steve brings his hands to his face as he tries to stifle a sob. It's too much. Why would Loki do this? Did he really expect Steve to go on with his life as though nothing had happened between them?

The thought of not having Loki by his side makes Steve’s stomach twist painfully and he jumps up, rushing to the bathroom. He throws himself to his knees in front of the toilet and retches over and over until he can only produce stomach bile, then he collapses down on his butt, back against the wall, knees pulled up to his chest. He rests his forehead on his knees not wanting to see his empty apartment. He doesn't know how long he stays like this.

“Sir? You wanted to know if there were any sightings of Captain Rogers?”

“Yes! Do you have something? Where is he?”

“I believe he is currently located in his apartment in Brooklyn.”

“What? For how long?”

“The scanner indicates a being matching Captain Rogers biometric parameters has been there for 1 minute 45 seconds.”

“Is there anyone with him?”

“No one else can be detected.”

“Call Natasha and have her meet me there.”

Tony approaches Steve’s apartment cautiously. He waits until Natasha joins him before knocking on the door. From inside the bathroom Steve hears the knocking. He hears his name being called and the knocking growing more insistent. He hears the door opening and 2 sets of footsteps, but he makes no move to get up.

"Bathroom," Natasha whispers as she walks across the bedroom to the open door. Inside she finds Steve still sitting on the floor next to the toilet, forehead on his knees, arms wrapped around his legs.

"Is he ok?" Tony asks from the bedroom.

Natasha doesn't answer as she moves in closer and kneels next to the Captain. He doesn't look injured, but she can tell he is far from alright. Steve doesn't look up, doesn't respond to her presence at all.

"Steve? Hey. Are you ok?"

"Steve?" she keeps her voice low and soothing, trying to coax a response from the soldier. "Come on look at me."

The blonde slightly turns his head, only enough for her to catch a glimpse of his tear stained face and
blood shot eyes. Natasha can hear voices in the bedroom and knows Director Fury has arrived. Tony for once is being helpful, running interference, keeping the Director out of the restroom and away from Steve.

"Let me see Captain Rogers," Fury demands.

Natasha rises to her feet and takes two steps out to confront the Director but keeps her voice low as she pulls the door partially closed behind her. "Not yet."

"Is he ok?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. Just give me a little bit. I'll handle him."

Fury stares down the diminutive agent, who doesn’t flinch under his withering look. "I want him in my office first thing in the morning," and then he turns to leave.

Tony takes a seat on the bed not sure what to do with himself as Natasha goes back into the bathroom. She eases herself onto the floor next to Steve and rests her head on his shoulder. She can feel his body shudder even as he makes no sound. Sitting up she puts an arm around him, squeezing his shoulders. He turns and wraps his arms around her waist, head against her chest as he is wracked with huge sobs. Natasha is not an emotional person, but as she pulls him into her embrace her heart can’t help but ache for him.

Tony pokes his head in the room after about ten minutes. Natasha looks up at him and he gestures that he is going to leave. He is out of his element. This is not a problem he can fix and so he heads back to his Tower where he can try to do something useful.

Loki sits on the floor of the cabin. He cannot cry any more. He cannot feel anything any more. This overwhelming sense of despair, he hasn’t felt since he fell from the bifrost.

Day 103

Its early morning when Tony opens the door to Steve’s apartment after the Captain does not answer it. The billionaire cautiously makes his way into the small apartment. He finds Steve curled up on the couch with a blanket pulled up over his head. “Ok…. Lets get you over to the Triskellion, Fury says you have to come in,” he tells the soldier as he pulls the edge of the blanket back.

Steve only curls further in on himself, not responding. Tony really wishes Natasha had pulled this job, but Director Fury insisted she had other duties to attend to that morning. “Have you eaten?” He tries. When Steve still doesn’t answer he goes on, “how about a shower?”

Still nothing from the blonde, “c’mon, you gotta give me somethin’ here…” he mutters to himself.

Steve blinks and slightly turns his face towards his team mate. “Hey, there you are. Lets get you up and moving,” Tony says as he pulls the blanket off, adding under his breath, “please don’t be naked under there.”

Tony takes Steve’s arm and pulls him up to his feet causing the blonde to frown. He is wearing the same rumpled t-shirt and sleep pants as the day before so Tony goes to the bedroom closet to find something suitable for him to wear. Deciding to forgo the shower, Tony hands Steve a pair of boxers, jeans, socks and a fresh shirt, then he looks around until he finds a pair of running shoes.
“C’mon big guy. We’re on the clock here.”

Steve finally starts to move and pulls his shirt off then pulls on the new one. Moving into the small kitchen, Tony makes himself busy by looking in the refrigerator and opening random cabinets while Steve finishes dressing.

Out of the corner of his eye he can see that the Captain is done, “ok ready to go?”

Steve still does not respond, but he moves towards the door much to Tony’s relief. Tony leads the way down to his car after locking the apartment door. Even though Steve still isn’t talking, at least he is finally cooperating. He is not looking forward to the long drive ahead.

“Do you want to listen to some music?” Tony ventures, hoping to fill the awkward silence.

As expected, Steve doesn’t respond and so Tony goes ahead and turns on the stereo as the blonde rests his head on the window and closes his eyes.

When they arrive at the Triskellion Tony walks Steve to Fury’s office and then heads back out to his car in a hurry to get out of there and back to his own gleaming tower. “Jarvis, we need to keep a close eye on Steve,” he tells the AI as he drives away.

Back in Director Fury’s office Steve sits in a chair staring blankly at the wall. “We’re glad to have you back Rogers.”

The blonde turns to look at the director, but doesn’t respond. “You know the drill, we need to get you into medical and debriefing. You’re to report to 12th floor medical immediately. Once you have been cleared, report to room 206 on the 4th floor.

Steve stands and exits the room without saying a word. He makes his way to medical in a haze. Opening the door, he is greeted by a tall man with dark brown hair. While his smile is meant to be reassuring, it has no effect on the soldier who endures the invasive testing, scanning and poking with no comment.

2 hours later Steve is sitting in room 206 facing Agent Maria Hill. He knows how to get through a debriefing and so he talks, giving a detailed account of the battle on the helicarrier, his injuries and the healing process. Despite Agent Hill’s insistent questioning he gives no explanation for the length of his absence.

As Steve is detailing his injuries for the fourth time, Director Fury steps into the room and dismisses Agent Hill with a nod. He has a file in his hand that he opens and drops on the table in front of the blonde. Steve reaches a hand up and fans out the various report pages and x-ray prints. He already knows what the report is going to say.

“Any other man would have never survived those injuries. Even a super soldier shouldn’t have survived. Loki did a good job of keeping you alive and healing you, but your timeline doesn’t quite add up. Your fractures look to be healed by a couple of weeks.” Fury waits for Steve to respond but the blonde just keeps pushing the reports around on the table.

“Son, I need to know what happened while you were gone. Start again and this time don’t leave anything out.”
“We were on the deck when Agent Barton….’” Steve begins, exactly as he has the previous four times. When he finishes speaking, Fury holds back his frustrated sigh. Based upon some of the medical examination reports he has an idea of what may have happened and Steve’s unwillingness to be forthcoming about events leaves him even more convinced.

“Captain Rogers, you are to report for further evaluation. 8 am tomorrow morning,” he says as he places a business card on the table in front of Steve, who picks it up reading the name, Dr. Marcus Ian, Psychiatry. There is an address in Manhattan.
Chapter 22

Unshatter me

Saliva

Jagged little pieces of a love you took from us,
Scatter like the ashes of my heart, you burned to dust.
Broken doesn't come close, to how you left me when you let go.
When you're away, when you're gone,
I'm alone, I'm afraid, I'm a ghost,
When no one's around,
But me talking to the voices in my head,
Lying with the demands in my bed.
Where you used to be,
Unshatter me, unshatter me.
Kneel down, put me back together, fix me like before.
You crossed me when you touch me, then I spill out on the floor.
Broken doesn't come close, to how you left me when you let go.
When you're away, when you're gone,
I'm alone, I'm afraid, I'm a ghost.
When no one's around, but me,
Talking to the voices in my head,
Lying with the demons in my bed,
Where you used to be,
Unshatter me, unshatter me.

Day 104

Steve arrives at the rather plain looking office building at 7:30 and makes his way up to Dr. Ian’s office. The Doctor begins by explaining that his office is a safe place and that unless he feels there is a danger to anyone, anything Steve tells him is strictly confidential, even from Shield. He then goes on to explain the structure of his sessions and what he expects out of his patients. Finally he outlines his goals for Steve. The hour long session is over before the soldier knows it and he is handed another card with an appointment for the next afternoon. He avoids talking to anyone else as he makes it to the garage level and rides his motorcycle home.

Loki pulls his blanket closer around his shoulders. The floor is hard and cold under him, but he cannot bring himself to sleep in the bed. Everywhere he looks he is haunted by memories of the life he had briefly enjoyed with Steve.

Day 105
“Captain Rogers, have a seat,” Dr. Ian greets as the soldier walks into his office. Like the day before, Steve sits on the couch farthest away from where the Doctor is seated in a leather chair. The office is full of warm tones, soothing artwork and soft fabrics. Steve still feels on edge as he grabs a throw pillow and pulls it defensively in front of his body, clutching it tight.

“Where are things today Steve?” The Doctor asks.

Steve pauses to collect his thoughts before he begins, “We were on the deck when Agent Barton…”

Malekith conceals himself inside the penthouse of Stark Tower listening to Tony Stark ramble to the shimmering image of the woman called Romanov. Finally the one called Steve has been located and so he knows that Loki is likely to be nearby. His patience is about to pay off.

Day 106

The stretch and pull on Malekith’s body is agonizing as he is forcefully pulled through space. Thanos grins at the elf as he struggles to get to his feet. “You have failed me”

“No! No I haven’t,” the elf rushes out.

“You have produced neither the scepter nor Loki.”

“I will! I have found Loki’s companion. He will lead me to Loki and I will bring him before you. I just need more time,” Malekith pleads.

With a gesture of his hand Thanos sends Malekith tumbling back through space.

Day 107

“Where are things today?” Dr. Ian asks as soon as Steve takes a seat. Again he pulls a pillow in front of his body as he thinks about what he wants to say.

“When do you think I can go back on active duty?” He finally settles on.

The Doctor’s expression doesn’t change and that annoys Steve for reasons he can’t explain. “My job here is to determine just that, but to do that I need you to trust that you can tell me everything that happened.”

“I already told them everything,” the soldier insists.

Dr. Ian turns his chair towards the desk behind him and picks up a file. He opens it and leafs through the pages. There is no need to read them over. He has been over the report several times. “Then I assume I must not have been given your full debriefing notes, because although I see a very detailed explanation of your physical injuries and a thorough accounting of the battle on the helicarrier just before your disappearance, I see very little information after that.”

Steve shifts uncomfortably on the couch, clutching the pillow just a little closer to his body.
Day 108

Steve opens the door after Tony’s second knock, trying to hide the irritation that he feels. He moves aside and allows Stark to come inside, surprised to see Tony but glad there is no one else with him.

The dark haired man gives Steve a long look, “are you alright?”

Steve moves to the couch and takes a seat, resisting the urge to grab one of the pillows. “I’m fine Tony.”

It’s hard for Tony to sit still so he moves around the room trying to avoid looking directly at the blonde, “are you sure? You’ve been gone for over a month. What happened?”

Steve pauses and thinks back on everything that has happened over the past month. He starts to tear up, but tells himself to focus on the details. It’s just another mission report. That’s all. “I was caught in a blast. The floor collapsed and I fell. I broke both legs, broken wrist, dislocated shoulder, miscellaneous lacerations, some internal injuries, head injury…” he trails off.

Tony turns to look at the Captain while he is talking, tone flat with no emotion.

“What about Loki? He was with you on the helicarrier. Do you know what happened to him?” Tony asks even though he already saw the debriefing notes and knows it was Loki that healed Steve.

Steve looks down at the floor. “He saved me,” he says.

“He what?” Tony asks as he casually walks around the room and checks the placement of his scanner on the bookshelf.

Steve looks up with tears in his eyes. ”he saved me, cared for me, healed me.”

“Where is he now?”

“l don’t…..,” Steve chokes up, ”he was supposed to come with me.”

Steve closes his mouth and turns his gaze to the kitchen not wanting to see the look of pity on Tony’s face. The billionaire is relieved when Steve looks away. He came by at Natasha’s request to check on the Captain. The blonde has been going to his therapy appointments, but has not been back to the Triskellion. Fury told them Shield was trying to give him some space until they had the psychological report back, but Natasha knows Steve doesn’t have any family or friends to speak of, no real support system.

Long silences make Stark uncomfortable and so he starts to make excuses to go. Both men are relieved when he leaves a few minutes later.

Day 109

Jarvis wakes Tony up. “There is an intruder in Captain Rogers apartment.” Tony puts on his suit and gets ready to fly to Brooklyn. Before he can take off, Jarvis interrupts, “it appears the intruder is gone sir.”

“I think I’ll pop over anyways, just to poke around,” he tells the AI heading for the roof.

When he arrives at Steve’s apartment he picks the lock and goes in to find the blonde asleep. He doesn’t see anything out of place and so he leaves, but he calls Natasha as he returns home, “I think
we need to keep a closer eye on Cap.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, someone was in his place tonight. They were gone by the time I got there, but I don’t want Loki getting his hands on Steve again.”

“Tell you what, I can be there in a few hours and I’ll stick close by, make sure Steve’s ok.”

Day 110

Steve wakes up and immediately spots his sketch book on his desk. He knows Loki must have brought it, he had left it at the cottage. He picks it up as he looks around the apartment trying to picture Loki walking around the space. He can almost picture the god standing in the kitchen, causally leaning against the counter smiling over a cup of tea. It hurts to think about what might have been, the life he wanted to share with Loki.

Reluctantly he gets ready and heads back to Manhattan, just like he has every day this week. Each day gets a little easier and so he talks, but today he finally truly opens up. His normally hour long session turns into 3 hours and he leaves not entirely sure how he feels.

Day 111

Director Fury is sitting at his desk. He sits opposite a middle aged man with salt and pepper hair and wire glasses. The man is wearing a brown suit and is trying in vain not to show how nervous he is.

Fury looks directly at him, "is he fit for duty?"

"My report is complete," he begins as he gestures to a file laying on the desk between them.

“Yes I read your report Dr. Ian. It was very technical. Humor me and give me the short answer.”

The Doctor frowns slightly, "as you know he is physically healed."

Fury makes an impatient gesture with his hand to indicate the Doctor should continue.

"The serum reacts in quite astounding ways, both physically and mentally. Frankly I don't know how Captain Rogers is still functioning at all."

“So you're telling me he is not fit for duty.”

“The Captain should be performing at peak capacity.”

“Should be....”

“When we look at Captain Rogers we tend to see only the soldier that the serum has turned him into. What we have all been blind to is the needs of the man within.”

Again Fury makes the impatient gesture.

The Doctor makes an irritated huffing noise. "The Captain is dealing with some emotional turmoil right now. It is my recommendation that he not be returned to active service until he has had time to
process what has happened.”

“What does he need to process?” The Director asks leaning his elbows on the desk in front of him.

"He needs to process his feelings. He is confused and grieving. He needs time.”

“Grieving what? What feelings,” the Director demands with a sinking feeling although he is sure he already knows the answer.

“You know I cannot divulge details of our sessions, but I can see from his file that he was given very little support when he woke up from the ice. He lost his entire world and now…..You asked my opinion about returning him to service and I gave it to you.”

The director glares at the doctor causing the man to flinch back slightly and clear his throat.

Fury sighs, “thank you doctor, you are excused.”

The Doctor practically jumps up and hurries out of the office. Fury sits back hard in his chair and grabs the report from the desk. He knew there was a chance that asking Steve to spend so much time with Loki could backfire and Natasha had warned him that Steve was possibly compromised. Now he has a super soldier that is emotionally unstable and without word from Asgard’s queen he has no way of knowing if it was even worth it.

Fury asks his secretary to have Captain Rogers meet him in his office the next day. He will have to be placed on leave.

Day 112

Steve is sitting in front of Fury, “Cap, you know I don’t want to do this, but you need to take some time and get yourself back together. Effective immediately I am placing you on an indefinite leave of absence. During this time you will be required to check in with your therapist and meet as he see’s fit.”

Steve doesn’t respond, just sits staring at his feet. “Son, do you understand?”

“Yeah, I got it,” he says as he stands and makes his way out of the office and to the parking garage, completely oblivious to the shadow of the dark elf that follows him.
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Steve and Tony have an argument

Chapter 23

Broken

Lifehouse

The broken clock is a comfort
It let's me sleep tonight
Maybe it can stop tomorrow
From stealing all my time
I am here still waiting
I still have my doubts
I am damaged at best
Like you've already figured out

I'm falling apart
I'm barely breathing
With a broken heart
That's still beating
In the pain
There is healing
In your name
I find meaning
So I'm holding on, I'm holdin' on, I'm holdin' on
Barely holding on to you

The broken locks were a warning
You got inside my head
Tried my best to be guarded
I'm an open book instead
I still see your reflection
Inside my eyes
That are looking for purpose
There still looking for life

I'm falling apart
I'm barely breathing
With a broken heart
That's still beating
In the pain (In the pain)
Is there healing
In your name (In your name)
I find meaning
So I'm holding on (I'm still holdin'), I'm holdin' on
I'm barely holding on to you

Hanging on another day
Just to see what you will throw my way
And I'm hanging on to the words you say
You said that I will, will be OK
Broken light on the freeway
Left me here alone
I may have lost my way now
Haven't forgotten my way home

I'm falling apart
I'm barely breathing
With a broken heart
That's still beating
In the pain (In the pain)
There is healing
In your name (In your name)
I find meaning

Day 113

Malekith crouches in the stairwell outside of Steve’s apartment. He has already searched the other floors of the building and now he settles in to wait and watch. He can feel Loki’s magic within the apartment and even more so on the man himself. It will only be a matter of time before he is able to hand Loki over to Thanos.

Day 114

Steve wakes in the early morning hours and briefly debates going for a run but ultimately decides against it. He is not ready to deal with the general public, it already pushes him to his limits just making it to his therapy appointments. If it weren’t for Natasha having food delivered every few days, he would have had to venture out sooner and so he is thankful to her for that.

He settles in on the couch with his sketch book on his lap and idly wonders what happened to the one that was left on the helicarrier along with the pictures and compass Loki had brought him. That leads him to wondering about Loki’s personal items. What would SHIELD have done with those? The pencil moves across the pages as he thinks about his time with the god, the little cabin in the woods that they shared, however briefly. It was wonderful, possibly the happiest Steve has been in a long time. Within a few hours, he has pages full of images of the cabin and surrounding area along with several of Loki.

Day 115
In the stairwell of Steve’s apartment building, the dark elf Malekith still watches. He waits for Loki to return for this mortal. Several times people have come to the apartment, including the man with the silly facial hair and the diminutive woman he had seen before. Others come with bags and boxes that are left inside. He see’s the man known as Steve leave each day for several hours, always returning looking worn and tired.

Loki lays on the bed that he shared with Steve. He is naked and his hand grips his cock. He strokes slowly along his length as he gazes upon the illusion of Steve that stands next to the bed. He knows how pathetic he is, but he cannot stop himself as he gives in to the pleasure that is both a relief and unsatisfying all at the same time.

Day 116

*Another day another session* Steve thinks to himself as he locks the door to his apartment behind himself and heads down the stairs. He both likes and dislikes the sessions with Dr. Ian. It helps to be able to talk to someone who doesn’t judge him for his feelings and choices, but he always leaves feeling emotionally drained and exhausted.

Malekith watches the blonde leave and then waits just long enough to make sure the man doesn’t come back unexpectedly. Once he is sure it is safe to do so, Malekith uses his magic to open the door and enter Steve’s apartment.

He is thoroughly unimpressed with the small dwelling. There is very little in the way of furnishings and almost nothing of a personal nature. Walking around, he picks up and examines a few books, noticing the small device on one of the shelves almost hidden from view. When he picks it up it begins to flash a red light and so he quickly sends a pulse of magic into the device shorting out the scanner. He puts the device back on the shelf where he found it and continues to look around.

The elf is about to give up his search when he see’s a book of drawings open on the small table in front of the couch. He picks it up and flips through the pages until he comes across several of Loki. Based on the nature of some of the images, Malekith is more sure than ever that Loki will come back for his mortal lover.

“Sir, there appears to be a malfunction in your scanning device at Captain Rogers apartment.”

“Don’t keep me guessing J. What kind of malfunction?” Tony asks his AI.

“Unknown. I can only detect movement just before the sensor stopped transmitting.”

Steve comes home several hours later. He feels numb as he drops his keys, missing the table. He looks at them on the floor, but cannot bring himself to bend down and pick them up. He just wants to curl up in bed and forget the world.

*What will you do if he doesn’t come back?*

*He’s coming back.*
But what if he doesn’t? Steve, you have to be realistic about this.

He’s coming back.

I know you want him to come back. Let me ask you this; Why do you want him to come back?

Because I love him. And he loves me.

Did he tell you that? Has he told you that he loves you?

No, but I know he does.

Steve, I’m not trying to be hard on you. But are you prepared to face the fact that you may be wrong about him?

I’m not wrong.

Ok. See Sharon at the front desk and she will set you up for your next several appointments.

Day 117

Tony knocks lightly on the door juggling a pizza and a six pack in one hand. It takes 3 times before Steve answers the door and when he does, Tony has to suppress the wince from looking at him. Steve’s eyes are red and puffy, his hair is a mess and he has several days worth of stubble on his face. The t-shirt and sweat pants he is wearing look like they have been slept in, for several days.

“I brought lunch, when was the last time you ate?” He lets his eyes glide up and down the disheveled man, “or showered?”

Steve just glares at him as he moves to the couch and flops down, automatically reaching for a pillow.

“So I, uh, wanted to ask you about the injuries you had.”

Steve gives no response so Tony continues, “Were they all from the Chitauri or did some happen later?”

Steve jerks his head up angrily, “no he didn’t hurt me. He was kind and gentle and caring. He is funny, smart, clever, loyal, brave.”

“Look, I know it can be hard to admit something like that can happen to you.”

“He didn’t hurt me, Tony. Really, I care about him and I know he cares about me.”

“Is that so? Then where is he? He sent you back Steve. Without so much as a goodbye. You said so yourself. How can you say he cares about you? Where is he now?” Tony’s voice starts to raise as his frustration mounts.

“I know he cares. If you gave him a chance, got to know him like I do, you would see. He is kind and gentle and witty and lost…” Steve trails off.

It’s obvious even to Tony that this conversation is not going anywhere so he changes the subject, “read any good books lately?” He moves over to the book shelf keeping his back to the blonde as he switches out the scanning device with a new one.
Day 118

“Have you talked to Steve about his obsession with Loki?” Tony asks as soon as Natasha answers her phone.”

“A little.”

“And you don’t see anything wrong with it?”

“I didn’t say that Stark.”

“He’s like this love sick puppy. Over Loki! I mean what the hell?”

“Look Tony, we don’t know what all happened between them. We don’t know what’s going on in Steve’s head right now.”

“You’re right. We don’t. Always good to talk to you Tasha,” Tony says as he disconnects the call.

Day 119

“Good morning Mr. Stark. Is there anything I can help you with today?” the young man at the front desk of the IT unit asks.

“Nothing today, uh,” Tony peers over his sun glasses at the man’s name badge, “Agent Stone. Just need a quick look at some files.”

“Ok, I just have to check your clearances first.”

The billionaire tries not to look irritated while he waits.

“Ok, you can use terminal 3.”

“Great! I’ll try not to reveal too many of Shield’s secrets,” Tony smirks as he breezes past the desk and into the IT room. He quickly finds his assigned terminal and just out of curiosity he logs in to see what he can access with his clearance level. As expected, it’s not much.

He pulls out a small device that he plugs into the back of the computer and then starts to type in commands.

“Are you in J?” He asks the AI.

“Yes sir. I will begin scanning for the files.”

“And that’s why I love you J,” he jokes as he logs off the computer and heads back out the door.

Day 120

“When do you expect to have that file for me J?”

“Soon sir. Probably sometime tomorrow.”
“Can’t make it sooner?”

“I can, but the files are located in an off site server and I think it best to hide our presence in the system, in case you ever need to get back in later.”

“Good thinking J.”

“Thank you sir, I do try.”

Day 121

Tony pounds on Steve’s door until the blonde jerks it open. The billionaire pushes into the apartment and whirls around to face Steve, waving a stack of papers in his hand.

“You cannot be serious with this!” Tony practically yells. “You know what he did, what he is. How can you even consider being his friend, let alone sleeping with him? I mean, is that what this is about? Is it about sex? I get that its been 70 years, but come on!”

Steve glares at Tony, but doesn’t respond.

“If it's not about sex then what is it? Because I can't see one other redeeming quality that he has.”

“No of course you wouldn’t. You don't even know him,” Steve yells as he paces around the room.

“No. I know you. Or at least I thought I did. This! Whats in these pages, isn’t you!”

Steve flops down on the couch and runs a hand through his short hair. “Yes Tony, it is. This is what I want. I don’t expect you to understand or agree, but I would hope you can at least respect it.”

“How can I respect that you think you want to play house with Loki! You’re Captain America for gods sake! You are a symbol of everything that is good, not this.”

“No Tony, I am Steve Rogers. I’m just a kid from Brooklyn. There is more to me than Captain America. Loki see’s that, even if you don’t,” Steve says quietly.

“Oh I bet he see’s a lot of you that I don’t.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” Steve snaps.

“Figure it out lover boy,” Tony growls back at him.

Steve sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose trying to compose his thoughts. This reaction is exactly what Loki was afraid of happening. “Ok look, there is more to you than just Iron Man isn’t there?”

“Tony stark and Iron Man are one and the same. There is no confusion here,” Tony says gesturing to himself. “I know who I can trust. Who has my back and who is an evil super villain bent on taking over the world. And I can’t believe that you have gone so far over the edge that you can’t see the truth.”

“What if I were to tell you not to see Pepper anymore, how would you feel about that?”

“Pepper isn’t a criminal!”
He tries to hold back his anger. He really does try. “Well then I guess we don’t have anything else to say to each other,” Steve says as he shoulders past Tony and opens the door so he will leave.

“Tell Fury if he wants to reach me he can. Otherwise we’re done here.”

Tony stomps out as Steve slams the door behind him. The billionaire punches his fist into the wall. Natasha is standing in the hallway and grabs him by the arm to stop him from doing any more damage. “You need to calm down.”

“What the hell is he thinking Nat?”

“I don’t know, but he’s a smart guy. I think he knows how hard this will be, no matter how it turns out.”

Day 122

Natasha is in Steve’s apartment, having watched him leave about 15 minutes prior. She quickly plants a small motion activated camera and checks that the feed is working, then she locates Tony’s scanner and removes it. She grabs the items she came for and locks the door then heads out. She knows Steve doesn’t have an appointment with his therapist and so she heads to the Smithsonian knowing he will show up sooner or later. She tailed him enough when he first came out of the ice to know the soldier’s habits by now.

He is sitting on a bench staring at the memorial wall for James “Bucky” Barnes, a baseball cap pulled low on his head. Natasha sits down next to him and bumps her shoulder against his. “Hey.” She has a duffel bag with her that she sets on the floor between her feet.

Steve looks at her briefly, but says nothing. “I can’t say I understand what you are going through, but I want you to know I’m here. You know, if you need to talk.”

He looks over at her and she can see the pain on his face. “I brought you a few things from your place,” she states as she toes the bag towards him. “There’s a place, a safe house, from before. Not on Shields radar. Address is in the bag. Take some time. We’ll call you if we need you.” She stands to leave and Steve stands with her.

He stoops to pull her into a hug, “thank you Nat,” he whispers. When he pulls back she can see tears in his eyes.
Send the Pain Below
Chevelle

I liked,
Having hurt,
So send the pain below,
Where I need it.

You used to beg me,
To take,
Care of things,
And smile at the thoughts,
Of me failing.

But long before,
Having hurt,
I'll send the pain below,
You used run me away,
All while laughing,
Then cry about that fact,
Til my returns.

But long before,
Having hurt,
I'll send the pain below,
Much like suffocating

Day 123

Loki steps out of Yggdrasil and into the Queens gardens. He finds her carefully pruning a bush covered in flower blossoms. Usually a task for a servant, he knows his mother finds it relaxing.

“Mother…” he begins, not sure of how to continue.

The Queen turns and gives her youngest son a soft sad smile. Placing the shears on a bench she goes to him and pulls him into an embrace. “What has happened Loki?”

“He went back to his companions,” he responds sullenly.

Frigga is surprised to hear this. “He chose to go back?”

“He said he needed to go back and so I sent him back.”
She can hear the waver in his voice and so she presses for more detail. “He said he didn’t want to be with you?”

“He said he needed to go back,” he repeats.

Frigga looks at him disapprovingly, “that’s not what I asked.”

“He said I should go with him.”

“But you didn’t?”

“I cannot!” Loki insists. “I will not be accepted. We will not be accepted. I will not be the reason he loses everything.”

“So you make the choice for him?”

“He would have made the choice anyway. I just spared him the guilt of doing it himself,” he tells his mother, turning his back to her. “He was never going to chose me over them.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Yes I do,” Loki says quietly. “They never chose me.”

The Queen pulls him close and rubs her hand soothingly up and down his back. “Oh Loki.”

She wants to check on his future but knows its best not too. She would be tempted to interfere and if having his heart broken again is what it takes to change his fate, then he will just have to suffer in the short term, but her heart hurts for him. She wishes that for once, he could find happiness.

Day 124

"Where is Steve?" Stark demands when he finds Natasha in her office at the Triskellion.

She slowly looks up from the report she had been reading. "Did you lose him?" she asks innocently.

"Don't give me that crap. You know he hasn't been staying at his apartment and I know you're too good to lose track of him. So where is he?"

"He was getting ready to rabbit. I gave him a better alternative."

"Just tell me where he is," Tony demands getting impatient.

"Planning on paying him another visit? That's why he was gonna run in the first place Tony. You need to back off. He is very aware that you're not happy with any of this."

"And you are?"

"I didn’t say that, but I know that Thor and Loki have opened a lot of eyes to just how completely outmatched we are in the scope of the universe and if we have any hope of surviving whatever gets thrown at us next, we will need Cap functioning at full capacity and having someone as powerful as Loki on our side sure as hell can't hurt either.”

“Are you serious? Now you want to bring Loki on board? What, make him an Avenger? You don't worry about Loki corrupting Steve? Or I don’t know, killing a bunch more people? What exactly
was the death toll at that Shield facility he leveled?"

Natasha hides her reaction carefully. She knows Clint got a similar argument when he brought her into Shield instead of killing her. "Lower than either yours or mine, I can assure you. My first concern is making sure Steve is ok. Past that, I have to look at the long game. For now, back off. I'm handling it."

Day 125

The man called Steve has not returned to his dwelling in several days. He watches and waits. Thanos’ patience will come to an end at some point. Malekith needs to think of another plan to draw Loki out. He doubts he will survive another of the Titan’s lessons.

Day 126

Malekith watches the woman come and go from the apartment taking some items out each time. With still no sight of Loki’s companion, he knows he will have to make a decision on his next course of action.

Natasha sleeps lightly. Which is nothing new in her line of work and so she is immediately on alert when her phone chimes. Grabbing the device from the side table, she checks the alert. She watches the feed from Steve’s apartment on the device. The recording is brief, just over a minute.

Malekith jerks his head up when he senses the tendrils of magic. It is brief, but the god has finally shown himself.

Day 127

Steve sits, staring at the TV, trying to focus on the baseball game on the screen. It’s hard though. He is intensely bored. Even though Natasha has been bringing him things from home, some art supplies, a few books, DVD’s, the IPOD Tony had filled with music for him, he cannot help but feel restless. It helps when she comes to visit, but he feels isolated, emotionally and physically and he knows she has other duties to attend to that don’t involve baby sitting him. The only real break he gets is when he goes to his appointments with Dr. Ian.

The Doctor tells him he is going through the phases of grieving and that it will take time to move on. He just isn’t sure he really wants to move on. He loves Loki, he is even more sure of it now, but he is less sure of how the god feels in return and that hurts.

Getting up, he grabs his jacket and heads out the door to take a walk. This is the first time since coming back from the cabin that he has gone out on his own that didn’t involve Shield, therapy or his one visit to the Smithsonian. He congratulates himself on taking a step forward.
Day 128

She sits in her living room trying not to watch her phone. If he shows up, she will know. It’s too early to detect a pattern for when the god shows up at Steve’s apartment.

2 hours later her phone alerts her that there is someone in Steve’s apartment. She checks the feed again. This video is even shorter than the last, only lasting about 30 seconds.

It will be tricky to get the timing right if she plans on trying to get the drop on the god, so she waits, trying to find the pattern.

Day 129

“Isn’t there someone else who can take this mission, sir?”

“Unfortunately no. I need your particular expertise on this job. Report to briefing room 47 in 2 hours and Agent Hill will go over the details with you.”

“Yes sir,” Natasha responds before leaving Director Fury’s office. She picks up her phone and dials the phone she provided Steve. He answers immediately and she almost winces at the anticipation in his voice. She knows how lonely he is.

“Hey, so I won’t be around for a couple of days. Fury is sending me out.”

He tries to hide the disappointment in his voice, “oh, yeah, no problem.”

“You’ll be alright?”

The slight waver in his voice is the only thing that gives away his emotions, “of course Nat. I’m a big boy. I can take care of myself.”

Late that night, as she is crouched behind a dumpster watching an arms deal go down, she feels the slight vibration from her phone. She can’t pull it out now, but she already knows what it will be. Finally a pattern is showing.

Day 130

He pulls the collar of his jacket higher and the hat on his head lower as he makes his way through the crowd at the Smithsonian, not wanting to be recognized. He walks through the exhibit, looking over every picture, reading each story, even though he has done this dozens of times before. His friends, his team, all gone while he slept for 70 years. Its not fair, he is tired of losing everything he loves.

Director Fury stands in front of the holographic images of the World Security Council.

“Would you care to enlighten the council as to why an asset such as Captain Rogers is not actively in the field?”

Fury suppresses the frown that wants to appear. He knew he couldn’t keep the Captains absence a
secret forever. Even with the added precaution of keeping all files related to his time spent with Loki and his disappearance on an off site secure server, he knew they wouldn’t stay in the dark for long.

“Captain Rogers is currently on leave. He was injured during the battle on the helicarrier and is recovering.” Not completely a lie…..

“That battle was some time ago. Are you telling us that he was that severely injured?”

“As a matter of fact, yes I am. The Captain will be ready for active duty as soon as he is cleared.”

Fury can’t tell if the council is satisfied with that answer or not. To his relief, they move on.

“And do you have further information regarding the aliens that attacked the helicarrier? What they were after, where they came from?”

“We are actively working with Thor to get those answers.”

“See that you do and inform us when you have those answers.”

Fury is ready to turn and leave, counting his blessing that they didn’t ask more questions.

“And one more thing Director Fury. The video files for the helicarrier during the time of the attack are corrupted and cannot be viewed. Further investigation revealed that there are many such instances of damaged surveillance files on board over the past several months.”

He keeps his expression blank despite the alarm he is feeling, “is there a point to this?”

“Only letting you know that there appears to be an issue with your security. Get it under control. Now.”

Day 131

The Black Widow is exhausted when she finally is done with her debriefing. All she wants is to head to home and get some sleep. Thankfully traffic is light and she is home in the shower in no time. That is where she is when her phone chimes again.

When she reviews the video later, she verifies the time and makes plans for the following night.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Warning- rape/non con ahead. You can skip the section in italics if you need to.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 25

This Love
Pantera

If ever words were spoken
Painful and untrue
I said I loved but I lied
In my life
All I wanted
Was the keeping
Of someone like you
As it turns out
Deeper within me
Love was twisted and pointed at you
Never ending pain, quickly ending life
You keep this love, thing, child, toy
You keep this love, fist, scar, break
You keep this love
I'd been the tempting one
Stole her from herself
This gift in pain
Her pain was life
And sometimes I feel so sorry
I regret this the hurting of you
But you make me so unhappy
I'd take my life and leave love with you
I'd kill myself for you, I'd kill you for myself
You keep this love, thing, child, toy
You keep this love, fist, scar, break
You keep this love
No more head trips

Day 132

Natasha is sitting in the chair when Loki appears in Steve’s living room. He frowns at her, then his expression changes to one of concern. “Is he okay?” he asks fearfully. “He hasn’t been here.”
“And yet you have Loki. Every night for the past week, in fact. If I didn’t know better I would think you cared.” When Loki doesn’t answer she asks, “Why are you here?”

The god just glares at her until she continues. He doesn’t have a good answer as to why he keeps coming back, but he can’t seem to stay away for long. “He’s confused, hurt, lost.”

“Hurt? I thought he was healed? Has something happened?”

“He is fine physically,” the widow tells him, her face devoid of any emotion.

“But....”

“But he has been put on leave. He isn’t eating enough, rarely sleeps, isn't focused and frankly I'm worried about him,” finally a crack in her mask and the god see’s a shadow of the concern she has for her Captain, but Loki isn’t fooled. He knows her show of emotion is intentional.

“He is Captain America. He will be fine,” Loki tells her in a clipped voice.

“No, he’s just a man and right now he is hurting, Loki. Because of you. He thinks you abandoned him.”

“I didn't abandon him! I did what I had to!” The god shouts.

Natasha stands her ground despite the tendril of fear that threatens to overtake her. “You did abandon him. He genuinely cares about you Loki. You can't just leave him.”

“This is not something I am proud of.” he says ducking his head. “Is he not staying here any longer?”

“He’s staying nearby. Somewhere off Shields radar. He needs time to think and sort out his feelings.”

Loki almost winces. ”I will admit that at the beginning, my motives were a bit more selfish. I sought to secure the Captains help with my… situation, but I have allowed things to go beyond that and for Steve’s sake and my own, I cannot let it continue.”

“So you will just make this decision for him? Give him no choice in the matter?” she challenges.

“You know what will happen if I don't leave. You know what he will have to go through.”

“Is that any worse that what is happening to him right now?”

“So what, I go to him and wait until he realizes what a mistake this is and leaves me? What then?”

“Why would he leave you?”

“He already did! To come back here, to all of you, to Shield, the Avengers.”

“He didn’t leave Loki. You sent him back.”

“He would have left. I do not belong in his world. It is only a matter of time before he figures it out.”

“He deserves more credit than that.” Loki narrows his eyes at the women as she hands him a piece of paper with an address on it. “Don’t break his heart.”

“Are you going to threaten me now Widow?” he sneers.
“No. It’s a request.”
Loki nods his head and vanishes.

Day 133
Loki takes a moment to focus on the tendril of magic for what he seeks. He reaches out and follows it like a beacon to his belongings.

“Director Fury,” Loki says as the man turns from where he is looking out his office window.

“I was wondering how long it was going to take for you to show up,” the director states as he walks over to his desk and sits behind it.

“Then you know why I am here. I will have what is mine, if you please.”

Fury opens a drawer on his desk and pulls out a box. In it is Loki’s journal, his world tree box, a few books and a couple of other items he brought back from Asgard. “There are a few of Captain Rogers items here as well. What do you think I should do with them?”

“That would be a question for him.”

“Somehow I think you’ll be seeing him before I do.”

The god only hums in response as he walks to the windows and looks out. He stands with his hands clasped behind his back, feet spread apart. “Tell me Director, will the Captain be allowed to return to duty?”

“If Captain Rogers is cleared by his therapist then he will be able to come back.”

“And his team mates? Will they be able to follow him knowing of our ……entanglement?”

Fury glances sideways at the god, “entanglement? The Captain has not been terribly forthcoming with details as to what exactly happened between you two, but I have a pretty good idea.”

“And does it disgust you Director? Which is worse, knowing that your great Captain lays with men or that he lay with someone as terrible as me?”

“Personally I don’t give a damn who he sleeps with, so long as it doesn’t affect his ability to do his job. The problem right now is that he isn’t able to do his job at all.” The Director gets up and walks to stand beside the god. “No matter what happens from this point on, there is going to be fallout from this. Walking away now is not going to stop that.”

Day 134
Loki sits in the cabin in Colorado. Everywhere he turns he is haunted by memories of Steve. Sitting at the table eating breakfast, talking about their mothers. Walking hand in hand down to the bathing pool. Steve building a fire while the god reads one of his favorite books aloud. Laying with his head on Steve’s chest, listening to the steady rhythm of his heartbeat. Touching, tasting and feeling every inch of each other. Holding one another close after making love. Smiling and laughing with each other. Listening to Steve’s soft breathing in his ear as the soldier sleeps, arms wrapped protectively around Loki. Feeling happy and complete.
Loki moves to the bed, that feels too big without Steve in it, and lays down, pulling the blanket over himself. He hugs Steve’s pillow close to his body and buries his nose in the familiar scent. In this moment, all he wants is to go to Steve and beg for forgiveness. He almost has himself convinced to go to Steve when he finally falls asleep.

“What did you do to me?” Loki asks as he slowly comes awake. He is disorientated, his head hurts and his vision is a little fuzzy. He tries to focus and that is when he feels the binders secured around his wrists. Immediately he reaches for his magic, but it doesn’t respond. His body feels weak and sluggish and he knows he has been drugged.

He tries to pull the metals bands off as Elgin sits and watches him struggle, a sadistic grin spreading across his features. “I gave you everything Loki and what have you done for me? Nothing. I took you in, gave you a home, gave you purpose, when no other would have you. I ask for a mere trinket in return. A bauble from Odin’s vault and you refuse me?”

“That trinket is not meant to be in the hands of men like you,” the god spits out.

“There are no men like me! With the tablet I would secure my place above all. Including you, sad, pathetic, second prince. How disappointed would Odin be to see you now? So desperate for acceptance that you cling to any crumb of affection. It was so easy to play you.”

Elgin pulls Loki up by the wrists and shoves him out into the living room, where he stumbles forward, crashing into a table. Loki can see several of Elgin’s friends in the room and he feels real fear for the first time. Drugged, weakened and unable to reach his magic, he knows he stands little chance of making it out unscathed.

He is shoved forward across the table, face smashed into the hard wood. He feels his nose break and has enough time to see the blood as it begins dripping onto the table. His hands are pulled out in front of him where they are held by one of Elgin’s cohorts. Two more keep his shoulders pressed forward as his pants are ripped away from his body and then there is pain.

“Did you think I meant it when I said I loved you? No one will ever love you.” Loki can feel Elgin’s hot breath on his neck. He squeezes his eyes shut, trying to block out the pain radiating from where Elgin is abusing his body. The binders rub the skin on his wrists raw as he works to get them off in hopes of reaching his magic. “Worthless. No good for anything except this.”

Loki stands in full battle armor watching as the flames lick higher up the walls of the room. The smell of burning flesh fills his nostrils. He barely registers the screams coming from one of Elgin’s cohorts as the fire starts to consume him. The god doesn’t spare the man a second look. He will die like the rest. Elgin was the first to die, his blood spilling from his stomach where his entrails slid from within and from the gaping wound where his manhood used to be.

It had been too kind, too quick for the god. His rage was turned upon those who came at Elgin’s call, those who would take their turn at abusing his body. If not for Samr, he would have been violated by more than just Elgin. Loki is not sure how Samr was able to get the key to unlock the binders and he is also not sure what made the farmer aid him instead of following along with the others, but he is grateful.

Loki turns to where Samr is standing in shock and nods his head in thanks. With one last look around, he strides out of the home and disappears.
He is sweating when he wakes up, frantically kicking the blanket off of his too hot body. The phantom smell of singed hair and burnt flesh lingers in the air.

The dark elf decides to take a chance and follow her. The woman called Widow leads him to a non-descript low rise building where he lingers just outside a door that leads into a lower level unit.

After she leaves, Malekith settles in to wait and watch. It is not long before he is rewarded for his patience as the blonde steps out from the unit and mounts his motorcycle.

Chapter End Notes

The tablet Elgin wanted is The Tablet of Life & Time which can grant near immortality/omnipotence.
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Steve takes a road trip.

Chapter Notes

We finally get the last piece of the puzzle of what Elgin did to Loki. The physical violation was bad, but Loki seems to struggle most with the psychological.

Chapter 26

This Is Gospel

Panic! at the Disco

This is gospel for the fallen ones
Locked away in permanent slumber
Assembling their philosophies
From pieces of broken memories

Oh, this is the beat of my heart, this is the beat of my heart

The gnashing teeth and criminal tongues conspire against the odds
But they haven’t seen the best of us yet

If you love me let me go
If you love me let me go
‘Cause these words are knives that often leave scars
The fear of falling apart
And truth be told, I never was yours
The fear, the fear of falling apart

Oh, this is the beat of my heart, this is the beat of my heart

This is gospel for the vagabonds,
Ne’er-do-wells, insufferable bastards
Confessing their apostasies
Led away by imperfect impostors

Oh, this is the beat of my heart, this is the beat of my heart
Don’t try to sleep through the end of the world
Bury me alive  
‘Cause I won’t give up without a fight  

If you love me let me go  
If you love me let me go  
‘Cause these words are knives that often leave scars  
The fear of falling apart  
And truth be told, I never was yours  
The fear, the fear of falling apart  

Day 135

Steve sits on the couch wearing the same dirty sweats and t-shirt he put on the day before. He is searching aerial images in Colorado, trying to narrow down a location for Loki’s cabin. He looks for towns near forested areas, then adds in parameters for streams and small bodies of water. It takes some time but he thinks he has it narrowed down to two possible locations.

He gets up and heads in to the shower then packs a backpack with a couple changes of clothes and some other necessities. After mapping out his course he hops on his bike and heads out. He stops for the night at a little motel in Ohio and after eating a quick dinner he goes to bed feeling better than he has since Loki sent him back.

Day 136

The miles rush by as Steve makes his way to Colorado. He pushes himself, only stopping for food and gas. In Kansas he gets a room at a run down place to sleep. It won’t be long before he reaches Colorado. He isn’t sure what he is going to do once he finds the cabin, but he just knows he needs to do something.

Natasha stops by to check on Steve, but lets herself in when he doesn’t answer the door and a quick check shows his motorcycle is gone. Immediately her attention is drawn to the laptop sitting on the coffee table. She opens it and checks the browser history. “Steve…..” she sighs.

Day 137

Steve rises early and heads out on the road again. He should make it to the first site by late afternoon. When he pulls into the small town he drives down the main street trying to picture Loki walking along the street, shopping for food at the local market, interacting with the people.

It’s too late in the day to hike into the woods to begin his search so he gets a room at the only motel in town. He walks along the towns main street looking for a place for dinner and finds a small coffee shop and goes in. The waitress greets him with a warm smile and tells him to sit any where he wants. Choosing a seat where he can look out the window he accepts the offered menu and orders a cup of coffee.

He knows he is being foolish but he finds himself hoping he will see Loki strolling down the street. When the waitress comes back with his coffee and to take his order, he is so focused that he is
momentarily startled.

"Sorry 'bout that hon. Ready to order?" she drawls.

"Uh sure. I'll have the meatloaf dinner and the chicken fried steak plate. Then the apple pie for dessert."

"That's a lot of food. You need one of those to go?"

"No ma'am. Just hungry."

"Ok sweetie."

Steve is a little surprised by the fact that he actually is hungry. He has had no appetite and has hardly eaten since coming back and with his metabolism that means he has started to drop a little weight, but once he finds Loki and gets him back he knows that will change and he will gain back anything he may have lost. He is feeling impatient to begin looking for the cabin but he knows getting food and a good night's sleep will be more beneficial for him.

The waitress brings him the check as he is swallowing the last bite of pie. She looks at his empty plates and smiles as she clears the table. Steve leaves enough cash to cover the check and a generous tip, then makes his way back to the motel.

Day 138

It's early morning and Steve has driven his bike as far as he can go before having to set out on foot to where he believes the cabin is located. He finds a stream and begins to follow it hoping it will lead him to something he recognizes.

His mind wanders back over the memories from his time with Loki, beginning on the helicarrier and then their time at the cabin. When he wanders into a clearing near the edge of the water he stops and looks around at the familiar sight. This is where he and the god first made love. He can feel the blush spreading over his cheeks at the thought, but he takes a moment to relive the memory. Drawing strength from it. He follows the stream further until he reaches the pond they used for bathing. This time he only stops briefly, knowing he is very close to the cabin.

When he gets there he stands in shock trying to figure out what he is seeing. The cabin looks old and in shambles, overtaken by vegetation. He goes inside and walks around, running his hand over the door frame, taking in the crumbling fireplace. Steve is standing in the kitchen looking at the cracks in the countertop from where he gripped it so hard, Loki behind him biting down on his shoulder while their bodies moved as one. He doesn’t look up when Loki appears in the cabin behind him.

With a wave of Loki's hand, the glamour lifts and the cabin is as it was, causing Steve to jump and turn around. He sucks in a breath when he see's his love standing there.

"Loki," Steve breathes as he closes the distance between them in 2 quick strides. He grabs Loki by the back of the neck and pulls him into a deep kiss.

It is the god who reluctantly breaks the kiss and steps away. "Why have you come back?"

"I came back for you. We were supposed to go back together."

"I cannot go back with you. Don't you understand? I cannot do this to you. I will not be a weight
“around your neck.”

“‘You’re not Loki,’” Steve says his voice verging on pleading.

“I will only drag you down. They will not accept this. Not accept me.”

“It doesn’t matter. I want to be with you. Doesn’t that count for anything?”

Loki paces the room in his agitation. “I will not allow you to throw your life away for someone like me!”

“And so what? We just give up? Go our separate ways? Because I'm not willing to let you go that easy. And how am I supposed to change your fate if you’re gone? What about that?”

“I can’t do this to you Steve. My fate, my future is not important, not compared to yours.”

“And so what? You leave? How does that make it better?”

“It’s better for you. You can find someone that is worthy of you. Someone that is good enough to be with Captain America.” Only good for one thing…I ought to kill you now, but not before we’ve had our fill princeling.

The god shuts his eyes trying to block out the memories.

“Dammit Loki! I'm not looking for someone for Captain America! This is me, okay? Steve Rogers and I love you. Okay Loki? I love you and I will not let you walk away from this,” the blonde shouts not noticing the way the god flinches at what he is saying. Did you think I meant it when I said I loved you?

“You have too,” Loki responds quietly.

“How can you look me in the eye and tell me that you don't feel it too? That you don't love me?” We laughed, we all did, every time you said you loved me. We made bets on how you would react when you finally figured out the truth. Will you cry little princeling? Will it break you to know you will never be loved? You may hear those words from another, but I have done you a favor. A kindness really. You will always know the lie, no one will ever love you.

Loki takes a shakey breath. "I don’t."

"Liar."

"I don’t love you," the god repeats through gritted teeth.

“Which one are you Loki? A coward or desperate?” Steve challenges.

“I am a god and I don’t love you.”

Steve can feel a crushing weight on his chest making it hard to breathe. It feels like one of the many asthma attacks he had before the serum. His vision starts to blur and he fumbles towards the bed where he collapses on his side.

He draws his legs up close to his body as the tears come. Loki approaches the bed and sits down next to Steve. “I didn’t want to hurt you, I don’t want to hurt you, but we both know this cannot be. No matter what you think you feel now, you will come to resent me. You will lose everything you have worked for and when you realize what a mistake this is, you will have nothing left.” He reaches out his hand to brush the blonde mans hair away from his eyes.
“How do you know that us being together is not what it takes to change your fate?” Steve whispers. Loki doesn’t respond, nothing he can say at this point is going to help.

“Just send me back,” Steve pleads.

The god gathers him in his arms and focuses on the safe house. When Steve opens his eyes, it doesn’t occur to him to wonder how Loki knew to take him there.

Day 139

“I trust he is back safely Widow?” Loki asks from the shadows of the stairwell. Its late and he looks tired.

“You doing, I presume.”

Loki doesn’t acknowledge her.

“You know, for someone who doesn’t care, you sure spend a lot of time here.”

“I came to bring his bike back. It’s in the garage.”

“All the way from Colorado? That’s some drive in a short time,” she remarks.

“Drove straight through, not that it matters.”

“Even so.”
Chapter 27

Creep

Stone Temple Pilots

Forward yesterday makes me wanna stay
What they said was real makes me wanna steal
Living under house guess I'm living I'm a mouse
All's I gots is time got no meaning just a rhyme
Take time with a wounded hand 'cause it likes to heal
Take time with a wounded hand 'cause I like to steal
Take time with a wounded hand 'cause it likes to heal,
I like to steal
I'm half the man I used to be (this feeling as the dawn it fades to gray)
Well, I'm half the man I used to be
Half the man I used to be
Feeling uninspired think I'll start a fire
Everybody run Bobby's got a gun
Think you're kinda neat then she tells me I'm a creep
Friends don't mean a thing guess I'll leave it up to me
Take time with a wounded hand 'cause it likes to heal
Take time with a wounded hand 'guess I like to steal
Take time with a wounded hand 'cause it likes to heal,
I like to steal
I'm half the man I used to be (this feeling as the dawn it fades to gray)
Well, I'm half the man I used to be
Half the man I used to be

Day 140

The time has finally come. Loki has come to his mortal lover. His appearance the night before
confirmed it. When he comes again for Steve, Malekith with finally be able to take him back to
Thanos.

“Captain Rogers,” fury greets as Steve walks into his office. The soldier doesn’t return the greeting,
choosing instead, to stare over the man's head at a fixed point on the wall.

Fury looks the man over taking in his rigid posture, the way tension exudes off of him as he clasps
his hands behind his back, the grim look of determination on his face. He notes that Rogers will not
make eye contact with him.
"Our press liaison will be holding a conference tomorrow afternoon to address the rumors around your situation."

Steve finally drags his gaze to Fury's face. "What situation sir," he growls.

"The one where you haven't been in the field. There are questions being asked."

"Why are you telling me this?" the captain asks as he resumes staring at the wall.

"Because you have a right to know what steps SHIELD is taking on your behalf."

"Since when sir?" the last word is punctuated with a snarl of disdain that the Captain makes no effort to disguise.

Fury barely suppresses the frustrated sigh that wants to escape his lips. "That's all soldier."

Steve doesn't wait for anything else and turns on his heel striding out of the room.

Day 141

Steve is standing outside the conference room listening as general instructions are given to the various members of the press that are gathered. He watches as the press liaison takes her place at the podium in the front of the room. She begins by giving a brief generic statement of SHIELD's roll in national security and then she begins her statement regarding Captain America.

"There been recent inquiries, speculation and rumor into the whereabouts of Captain Steven Rogers also known as Captain America. I will not address these specifically but I will say that Captain Rogers is currently working diligently with SHIELD in the roll that he has always filled as a peacekeeper, a champion for justice and protector of people everywhere." The pause for her to look over her notes allows several of the reporters to begin shouting out questions.

"Where is Captain Rogers now?"

"Why isn't he at his own press conference?"

"Why haven't we seen him in the field with the other Avengers?"

"Is there a rift in the team?"

Steve pushes open the door and as all heads turn towards him, he makes his way to the podium. The liaison looks positively stricken as she watches him approach but steps back to allow him to speak.

"Sorry I'm late," he begins, trying to force a smile that doesn't quite reach his eyes. "I'm pressed for time but I can answer a few of your questions."

Immediately the group of reporters begins shouting questions again. Steve points to a middle aged man in the third row. "Captain Rogers in recent weeks the Avengers have been engaged in several missions without you. Are you still a member of the Avengers?"

"It's true that I have not been in the field in recent weeks, but I am still an active member of the Avengers." He points to another reporter as the group begins to shout follow up questions.

"Why haven't you been in the field? Were you on a secret mission?"
"No." Again he tries to smile and again he fails to make it convincing, “I was merely indisposed for a time, but I assure you that I am ready to serve in any capacity that SHIELD deems necessary."

"Captain! Are you saying you were injured? You've been gone for weeks. Is it even possible for a super soldier to be hurt enough to take weeks to heal?"

Steve takes a steadying breath then looks directly into the lights atop the many cameras pointing his direction. "Even super soldiers can get hurt."

Loki sits on the chair in front of the TV in Steve’s apartment in Brooklyn. His heart aches as he watches Steve speak. When the captain looks directly into the camera and speaks again it as if he is talking directly to Loki. *Even super soldiers can get hurt.* Loki almost reaches out to the screen as Steve turns and exits the room.

Loki sits and stares at the screen not really hearing the liaison as she quickly steps back up to the podium "as you can see, Captain Rogers is fine and you can expect to see him in action very soon, even though we hope that doesn’t become necessary." She retreats from the room as more questions are shouted after her.

Steve is already gone, having fled to the garage where he gets on his motorcycle and drives away.

Loki curls up in his chair trying not to think about Steve, but his treacherous mind won't let him have any peace.

Director Fury is called in front of the world security council again. He isn’t surprised when they tell him to get Captain Rogers in the field immediately, but he is surprised when they tell him they were able to recover some of the video feed from the helicarrier.

“I get the feeling you don’t trust me,” Fury remarks.

“Trust is highly over rated in this business Director. This alien, Loki, where is he now?”

“I don’t know.”

“Does Captain Rogers know?”

“I don’t believe he does.”

“Find the alien Director. Make this your priority. Once we have him, we can discuss why you didn’t inform this council that he was in SHIELD'S custody.”

**Day 142**

Tony Stark sits at the counter in his lab working on a prototype long range tracking system when Jarvis interrupts him, "sir, Director Fury is on the line."

Without even looking up the billionaire says, "what's up Fury? Kinda in the middle of something."

"Not anymore. There are confirmed sightings of doom bots attempting to breach the First National Bank. The team is being called in."

"The team? " Tony inquires.
"Yes. The team. Captain Rogers needs to get into the field."

Tony frowns, "are you sure that's a good idea?"

Stark can almost hear the impatience in the Director’s voice, "do you have a better suggestion? He needs to focus on his job and get back to leading the team."

"Then why are you telling me?"

The sigh is almost inaudible, "just keep an eye on him. I want a full report when you get back," Nick says as disconnects the line.

It almost seems like overkill sending in the Avengers to handle a dozen doom bots, but Clint is not one to question orders. He is happy to be back in action and he truly believes that Steve will benefit from it as well.

When the last doom bot is out of commission, Steve does a quick turn to sweep the area for other threats as Clint calls in an all clear from his perch several building over. Without even acknowledging it, Steve stalks towards the SHIELD vehicles waiting 2 blocks over to return them to head quarters for debriefing.

Tony catches up to Steve just as he climbs into the back seat of one of the vehicles, "hey, so I'm famished. There's this shawarma place I wanted to try. Not too far, like a team building thing. Get some food, talk about best ways to eliminate bots without so much collateral damage....." Tony trails off as Steve levels him with a glare and then goes back to staring out the window.

"Ok well, good talk," he says and backs away just as Clint and Natasha make it to the suv. Natasha lifts an eyebrow questioningly, but Tony only gives a slight shake of his head then flies off in the direction of the Triskellion.

Tony finds director fury in his office and saunters in still wearing his suit.

"How did it go?" Fury asks without looking up from his computer screen.

"I'm sure you have seen the footage. He was precise and efficient."

"I hear a but in there stark..."

"There was a daycare a few buildings down. The kids all got evacuated all right but they were pretty shaken up. Normally checking on those kids, making them feel better, that's a Steve thing. But today? He just finished the job and that was it, wanted to just leave."

"So your concern is that the Captain completed his objective and didn't feel like hanging around after?"

"You asked me to keep an eye on him. That's what I saw. Yeah, he did his job, but Cap is..... I don't know.... he's just more than that. At least I thought he was."

The look on fury's face is grim, "your concern is noted."

Fury walks into the room where Steve is being debriefed about the mission. The agent sitting opposite of the Captain barely spares a glance at Fury while he asks his final questions and then exits
the room.

Steve says nothing, just stares at the table, hands clasped loosely in front of him. Fury grabs a chair and turns it backwards to straddle the seat. "I'll read the reports later, but tell me, how did the mission go?"

"The mission was a success sir. The doom bots were eliminated, the bank secured and there were no fatalities," Steve reports without emotion.

The corners of Fury’s mouth turn down ever so slightly as he gets up, "I want you in Dr. Ian's office by the end of the week,” he says as he walks out of the room.
Chapter 28

Love The One You're With

Crobsy, Stills, Nash

If you're down and confused
And you don't remember who you're talking to
Concentration slip away
Because your baby is so far away

Well there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love, honey
Love the one you're with

Don't be angry, don't be sad
Don't sit crying over good times you've had
There's a girl right next to you
And she's just waiting for something to do

And there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love honey
Love the one you're with

Turn your heartache right into joy
'Cause she is a girl and you're a boy
Get it together, make it nice
You ain't gonna need any more advice

And there's a rose in a fisted glove
And the eagle flies with the dove
And if you can't be with the one you love, honey
Love the one you're with

Day 143

“Yes,” Steve greets as he answers his phone after several rings and an internal debate about whether or not he really wants to even talk to Tony right now.

“Hey Spangles. I was thinking we could meet up, go out for a drink, you know, celebrate your return to action.”
“I’m not really feeling up to it Tony.”

“Nonsense. You need to get out. I’ll have a car come pick you up. Where are you staying?”

Tony is hoping Steve will be lulled into giving him the address to the safe house, since he has not been able to track him using the phone Natasha provided Steve, but he is not surprised when Steve responds, “you know I can’t get drunk Tony and like I said, I really don’t feel up to going out.”

“You’re in luck then. Thor left a bottle of that Asgardian mead last time he was here. I am pretty sure that will do the trick. Just come out for a little while. Get your mind off of……everything. Might do you some good,” Tony reasons.

Although Steve doesn’t really want to go out, the thought of being able to get drunk and maybe forget about Loki for even a few hours sounds really appealing and he needs to make good with the team, make it look like he has it together. “Is the rest of the team coming?”

“I told them about it,” Tony hedges. Hoping Steve won’t pick up on the half lie.

“Yeah ok. A drink, but not out. I’ll come to the tower.”

“Hey yeah buddy, whatever you want. I’ll see you tonight then.”

It’s 8pm by the time Steve exits the elevator and enters the penthouse of Stark Tower. He is immediately assaulted by the sound of loud music. Looking around he spots Tony sitting on a sectional sofa surrounded by half a dozen women, drink in hand. Steve frowns at the sight. He really hadn’t planned on having to be social, but before he can make an excuse to leave, Tony calls out, “You made it! I have your drink ready right here.” He indicates a glass sitting on the coffee table, ¾ full of a light brown liquid.

The blonde steps up and picks the glass up off the table and then takes a seat on the loveseat furthest away from Tony and the girls. Tony grins at him and raises his own glass to Steve before taking a drink. Steve brings the glass to his lips and takes a cautious sip. The taste is strong and bitter, but not terrible, so he quickly downs the rest of the drink.

Tony smirks at the soldier, “Sherry, why don’t you fill Steve’s glass for him.”

Sherry is slender with brown hair and eyes and olive skin. She immediately gets up and saunters over to Steve, picking up the bottle of liquor from the table. She drapes herself across the blondes lap as she opens the bottle and refills his drink. Steve glares at her, but wastes no time emptying his glass. She fills it again as she wraps an arm across his shoulders. “Here you go doll, have another.”

Her voice is pitched lower, an attempt at seduction, while she begins to run her hand up Steve’s arm. “Get off me,” he tells her, his voice a low growl. She quickly jumps from his lap and scurries back to the couch with Tony as the blonde fills his glass again.

Tony looks subtly at the girl sitting at his side. She has short blonde hair, blue eyes and long legs. She takes the hint and moves to sit in a chair closer to Steve. The soldier looks up at her and glares again, but she makes no move to get closer and so he says nothing.

The billionaire gets up from his seat and moves to the center of the room. “C’mon girls lets dance.” He begins to move to the music as all the girls, except the blonde next to Steve, follow him to the make shift dance floor. Steve watches as they begin to writhe and grind against each other, in something that he guesses is supposed to be erotic. He turns away in disgust only to be faced with
the blonde girl looking directly at him.

“You don’t like to dance?” She asks innocently.

“That’s not dancing,” he snaps.

She chuckles, “no not really, but its what passes for dancing these days. Nothing like the way they used to dance in the past. With style and grace,” she smiles wistfully at him.

Steve says nothing, just takes another drink from his glass. Then turns back to glance at Tony and the other girls, wondering briefly where Pepper is. He sits back on the love seat, staring straight ahead, only moving to fill up his glass and take another drink.

The girl tries to start the conversation again a few times, each time she is met by stony silence until finally she gives up and goes to join everyone else on the dance floor.

“No luck huh?” Tony asks when she approaches.

“Nothing. Got yourself a real stick in the mud there,” she responds as she presses her body close, moving to the beat.

“Yeah well, maybe you just aren’t his….. type……Oh shit.” He pulls out his phone and sends a quick text message then resumes dancing.

Twenty minutes later Steve is standing looking out the windows at the city below. He is halfway through the bottle of mead and is now drinking directly from the bottle. He sways a little on his feet, feeling unsteady from the strong drink. He is both grateful and disturbed that he is finally able to get drunk.

The chime of the elevator breaks him from his revere and he turns, expecting to see the other Avengers emerge, but instead a lone man steps out. Steve’s heart skips a beat when he takes in the tall, lean figure, the black, wavy, shoulder length hair. For just a moment he is fooled into believing Loki has come, but when the man steps further into the room, Steve realizes that it was a trick of the light, combined with his drink addled brain making him see things.

The dark haired man has a package in his hands and starts towards Tony, but the billionaire waves him off. “Busy right now. Have a seat,” he instructs. The man shrugs his shoulders and places the package on the coffee table then sits on the loveseat Steve had occupied before. He barely spares a glance at the blonde.

Steve tips the bottle back and takes another swig, swaying heavily as he tilts his head back. He decides to move to one of the chairs since his former seat is now occupied by the new comer. He continues to drink, stealing little glances at the black haired man. “You wanna drink?” He asks holding the bottle out.

The man looks startled when Steve addresses him, “no, thank you. I don’t really drink. And I’m on the clock for Mr. Stark right now so….you know.”

His voice is low and slightly accented, so reminiscent of a memory Steve is trying to drink away. He takes another drink before asking, “what do you do for Stark?”

“I usually act as a liaison between the company and some of its clients.”

“That sounds… boring,” Steve huffs.
The dark haired man smiles, “yes, it can be quite dreadful at times. I’m Leon, by the way.” He leans forward and reaches his hand out to the soldier.

The blonde puts his bottle down long enough to reach out and shake the offered hand, trying to ignore the way that Leon allows his fingers to brush along his hand. Steve sits back and takes another drink.

An hour later Steve is leaning close to Leon as they talk about baseball. The blonde is slurring his words and sways in his seat. When he tilts the bottle back for another drink, he spills it down his shirt and smiles crookedly.

Leon’s brow creases slightly and he stands, gently pulling the bottle from Steve’s hand. “You’ve probably had enough. Probably should lay down and try to sleep it off.”

The blonde looks down at his shirt, then to the bottle that Leon is now holding, “yeah, ok. Sleep sounds good.”

“Come on,” Leon tells him as he helps pull him to his feet. Steve over balances and grabs on to Leon to steady himself, bringing their bodies close together. Leon straightens and guides the soldier out of the room and down the hallway towards one of the guest bedrooms. He spares a glance at Tony who has been on the couch surrounded by the girls, watching a movie, for the past half hour.

Leon opens one of the bedroom doors and ushers the blonde inside closing the door behind them. He leads Steve to the bed and begins to unbutton the blonde’s shirt before urging him to sit on the edge to remove his shoes.

Sitting on the bed next to Steve, Loki (Leon) works the blonde’s shirt off his shoulders and drops it to the ground. Steve moves forward, despite his unsteadiness and pulls Loki (Leon) into a heated kiss. The dark haired man opens his mouth to deepen the kiss as he brings his hand to cup the side of Steve’s face.

Steve moans into Loki’s (Leon’s) mouth as he feels the dark haired man brush his cock through his pants. He can feel Loki (Leon) push harder on the front of his pants, obviously aware of the blonde’s apparent lack of arousal, but Steve continues, turning the kiss into something desperate. The soldier reaches for Loki’s (Leon’s) slacks and works the button and zipper open before working his hand in and gripping his hard member. He starts stroking up Loki’s (Leon’s) length as the dark haired man gently urges him to lay back on the bed.

Loki (Leon) stretches out over Steve, kissing along his neck as he opens the front of his jeans with one hand. He stops long enough to help the soldier remove his pants and underwear and then pauses to take in the beautiful sight before him. Working as a liaison for Stark Industries definitely has its perks at times. Most of the clients he sees to are not much to look at, but the job pays well even if he is little more than a paid escort.

The only issue is that the blonde is still showing a distinct lack of arousal, but Loki (Leon) knows how to remedy that and so he moves to kneel between Steve’s legs. He kisses Steve’s thigh and then gently takes his still flaccid cock in his hand. Loki (Leon) looks up at Steve to check his reaction again as he prepares to take him in his mouth.

When Steve feels Loki (Leon) pause, he looks up to see the man gazing at him. He looks deep into those warm green (brown) eyes and panics. He scrambles up the bed trying to get away.
“Get out! Get out! Get out!” He screams as tears begin to stream down his face.

“Steve, hey its ok. Its just me. Everything’s fine, just calm down.”

“I said get out!” Steve lunges off the bed and runs for the bathroom, but he isn’t in time and the contents of his stomach empty themselves all over the tile floor. He crawls to the toilet and sits on the floor in front of it, leaning his head on his arms. “Loki, I’m so sorry… so sorry… please forgive me….oh god….”

Leon stands and tucks himself back inside his slacks, fastening them as he follows Steve to check on him. He watches the blonde for a moment, then he turns to leave, unwilling to watch him cry.

Day 144

Steve jerks awake looking around the room confused. It takes him a moment to remember where he is. He grabs his clothes, throwing them on, then heads out to the door and straight to the elevator. For once, luck is on his side and he doesn’t run into anyone on his way to the garage where he gets on his motorcycle and heads back to the safe house.

“Sir. Captain Rogers has taken his motorcycle and left the tower.”

“What about Leon?”

“He left several hours ago.”

“Ok go ahead and send the video to my workstation.”

“I will remind you again, this is a gross invasion of the Captain’s privacy.”

“J, I’m just worried about the guy. Send me the video,” Tony says, tone more short than usual.

The video loads and Tony watches it with only a slight twinge of guilt. When it is over he plays it again marking several places, then he prints off the images he marked, seals them in an envelope and heads to bed.

Two hours later Steve’s phone chimes with a text message. He unlocks the screen and reads over the message from the unknown number.

Not sure how much u might remember. u had a lot to drink.

Steve Stares at the screen racking his brain to remember details of the previous night. He almost drops the phone when it chimes again.

loki must be something special. if it doesn’t work out give me a call-leon

Steve’s eyes begin to water as it all comes back to him. Kissing Leon, touching him. They didn’t have sex, but that does not absolve Steve of his guilt. It never should have gotten that far. He feels sick again as he thinks about what almost happened, what he almost let happen.
I hope it made sense that Steve was so drunk by the time he got back to the room he thought/ hoped he was with Loki until he really focused and noticed the eye color was wrong.
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Steve has a plan, but so does Thanos.

Chapter 29

Hurt

Nine Inch Nails

I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain
The only thing that's real

The needle tears a hole
The old familiar sting
Try to kill it all away
But I remember everything

What have I become
My sweetest friend
Everyone I know
Goes away in the end

And you could have it all
My empire of dirt
I will let you down
I will make you hurt

I wear this crown of shit
Upon my liars chair
Full of broken thoughts
I cannot repair

Beneath the stains of time
The feelings disappear
You are someone else
I am still right here

What have I become
My sweetest friend
Everyone I know
Goes away in the end
And you could have it all
My empire of dirt
I will let you down
I will make you hurt

If I could start again
A million miles away
I will keep myself
I would find a way

Day 145

"Captain Rogers," the Doctor greets, "have a seat."

As usual Steve walks to the couch near the door, where he sits ramrod straight.

"Where are things?" Steve has begun to dread those words. Every session begins the same way. Sometimes it's easy and the words come of their own volition. Other times it is hard. Today is one of those days.

"I understand you had your first mission since being back," the Doctor leads.

When Steve doesn't respond he tries again, "how do you feel now that that's behind you?"

Steve frowns at the Doctor, "how do I feel? What am I supposed to feel? I had a job to do and I did it. There is nothing to feel about it."

"I understand there were children in a nearby building that could have been in danger. Did that make you angry?"

"I can't afford to allow myself to feel things like anger, fear, sympathy-"

"Compassion? Love?" the Doctor interrupts. Steve only glares at the Doctor as he continues, "we cannot ignore what we are feeling. Fear and even anger are healthy responses. Especially in combat. Sympathy, empathy, trust, and even love are part of what makes us human."

"I'm a soldier, when I allow myself to feel, people get hurt."

"What people Steve?" when the soldier doesn't answer he prompts again, "who gets hurt Steve?"

"I was created to be a super soldier. That's what I am. I cannot afford any distractions or allow myself to get emotional or else people will get hurt!"

"So you just lock it down? Ignore what you feel?"

"What else would you have me do? I let my feelings get the better of me and look what happened."

"So you got hurt. You're human."

"I can't...... I need to focus. On my job, on the missions. I can't do anything else right now."

"You will have to deal with this. We will continue to meet if you want to stay on active duty. Go see Susan at the front desk and she will set you up with your next several appointments."
Day 146

Steve is standing in front of the mirror with his razor in his hand. He stares at his reflection, forgetting that he had planned to shave the light stubble from his face. Absentmindedly he runs his thumb across the blade cutting open the flesh. He stops when he feels the blood running down his hand. Dropping the razor in the sink, he looks back at himself in the mirror. He reaches up and swipes his bloody hand across his reflection before drawing his fist back and smashing the mirror.

He pulls his fist back and punches the mirror again and again until he cannot see any of his reflection in the bloody shards.

Day 147

“What happened to your hand?” Dr. Ian asks when he sees the bandages.

“Nothing. Just cut myself,” comes the answer, as Steve sits and pulls a pillow in front of his body.

Dr. Ian frowns at the blonde.”How did it happen?”

“I told you, its nothing. I wasn’t being careful and broke a mirror.” Its not quite a lie.

Day 148

Loki lets himself into Steve’s Brooklyn apartment again. He knows the soldier is still staying at the safe house. He walks around the small space running his hand over the top of the couch, along the kitchen counter and across the blanket covering the bed when he finally sits down. He can feel Steve in the space. The god lays on his side, pulling Steve’s pillow into his chest as he takes deep breaths to try and keep the heartache from overtaking him.

When he wakes from a fitful sleep he feels something that he missed before. It is faint, but the slight tinge of magic is definitely there. He immediately heads to the safe house.

Day 149

Stubborn is a word Steve has often heard directed at himself. Stubborn, resilient and tactically minded, characteristics that saw him through his youth and into the war. In times of stress and crisis he falls back on those traits. And so he plans.

When it is time, Steve leaves the safe house for yet another appointment with Dr. Ian, unaware that Loki is crouched, cloaked in shadows and magic, nearby. The god watches Malekith. Since the dark elf has made no move to harm Steve, Loki assumes Malekith is looking for him. He needs to draw him away and so he steps out from the shadows, allowing himself to be seen, but still keeps himself shielded with this magic.

Malekith turns when he hears someone approaching. He is shocked to see Loki striding forward, dagger in hand. Before he can react, Loki has him by the throat and they are twisting through space
only to appear in a field somewhere far away from Steve. Loki jabs his dagger into Malekith’s neck, drawing it through the flesh, severing muscle, tendon and artery. He releases the dying elf, allowing him to fall to the ground. Loki is not satisfied knowing Malekith will bleed out from this wound, he is angry and wants the elf to pay and so he bends to thrust the dagger back into the elf, meaning to gut him like an animal, but before he can land the blow, Malekith disappears.

“I’ve lost everyone that ever meant anything to me when I went into the ice. I gave up everything! I don’t want to lose Loki too. If there is any chance at all, I have to do everything I can.”

Dr. Ian looks across at Steve, “Have you seen him?”

“Not recently, but I will,” the blonde answers. He has no way to get in contact with Loki, but he thinks he may know a way to draw him out.

Day 150

Natasha walks into the infirmary and finds Steve sitting at the edge of an exam bed.

"How's your head?" she asks.

"It's fine. Be better if they'd hurry up and let me get out of here," he snaps.

"So no concussion?"

"No."

"Steve, are you sure you're alright? You ran in that building when Tony had it under control."

Steve won't lift his head to meet her gaze. "What do you want me to say? I did what I thought was right."

"What was right to end the fight? Because I'm not sure about that."

"I made a call, if you don't like it, take it up with Fury."

Natasha keeps her expression blank as she thinks of the best response, "if you tell me you're ok I'll accept it, but I need you to be straight with me. Are you ok?"

"I'm fine," he responds, his jaw clenched tight. In reality, Steve is angry. He had hoped putting himself at risk would cause Loki to show up to protect him. He isn't ready to give up on his plan though.

Natasha knows he is far from alright, but decides to hold off on talking to Fury, but she plans to stick close to the Captain in the field just in case.

Day 151

“I told you, I don’t know where Loki is,” Director Fury reiterates yet again.

“We want him found. This council is losing confidence in your ability as Director.”
Fury glares at the holographic images of the council. He doesn’t shy away from their images, but he doesn’t know how much longer he can hold them off.

Day 152

Loki lets himself back into Steve’s apartment. He knows it’s selfish, but he likes staying there. He feels closer to the soldier. And even though he knows it is probably a bad idea to linger around Steve, he can’t quite bring himself to stay away.

He justifies it by telling himself he is staying close to keep Steve safe and if he doesn’t think too hard about it, he can believe that’s all it is. He will rest for awhile and eat then head back to the safe house. Malekith’s wounds should have been fatal, but Loki doesn’t want to leave it to chance. At least that’s what he tells himself.

Day 153

Thor knocks on the door to the safe house, having gotten the address from Natasha. She has purposely guarded Steve’s location, hoping to spare him from any unnecessary scrutiny.

Unfortunately, this means that Steve is isolated most of the time. There are few people that she would trust to spend time with Steve right now. The only other person she has even considered is Dr. Banner, but she hopes that Thor’s general enthusiasm and joviality may help draw Steve out.

The soldier leans in and looks through the blinds on the window. He is surprised to see Thor and quickly moves to open the door. “Thor!” He greets breathlessly, as he tries to push down the sudden feeling of fear that is eating at him. “Has something happened to Loki?”

“No, I have not seen him since the battle with the Chitauri. I had hoped that you knew something of his whereabouts.”

Steve tries to hold back his disappointment, “Oh. Okay then.” He leads the blonde god into the house and sits on the couch. Thor fairly occupies the recliner he chooses to sit on. “I saw him recently. He seemed well. I guess.” He cannot bring himself to look Thor in the eye and so he stares at his hands.

Thor looks thoughtful, with no sign of his usual over the top exuberance. “I won’t pretend to presume the nature of your relationship with my brother, but if you wanted to talk about….. things. I would be happy to listen.”

Taking a deep breath Steve looks forward at the blank TV screen suddenly wishing it was on to serve as a distraction. He has been trying to push thoughts of Loki out of mind and speaking with Thor is not likely to help that, but he cannot stop himself from opening his mouth, “what was he like when he was young?”

Thor looks thoughtful for a moment and then gives a sad, wistful smile, “he was my best friend.” His smile falls as he continues, “it wasn’t until much later that I learned he didn’t feel that about me. He felt as though he lived in my shadow and I was completely oblivious to his pain. I failed him.”

“The soldier looks at his team mate, but doesn’t respond. He knows Thor is not done.

“When I saw him on the helicarrier I was angry. I meant to take him back to Asgard to be judged by the Allfather. Seeing him fight along side you and protect you, I will admit, I was jealous as well.
When Director Fury showed me some of the images of you and my brother I realized you have developed the bond I once held with him. And maybe something more.”

He stands and walks to the window to look out. “When I returned to Asgard I began to look closer at Loki’s life. I realize that I never really understood him. I couldn’t be bothered to find out what was behind his biting remarks, his quietness, the way he jumped at shadows at times. I suppose I didn’t want to know, so wrapped up in my own quest for greatness. He was right to stop my coronation. I was not ready to be King when I was not even able to be a good brother.” Thor continues to stare out the window until he hears Steve shift on the couch behind him.

“I’m sorry Steve, I did not come here to discuss my failures as a brother. You wish to hear of Loki’s childhood. I would be happy to share stories, but first I have a question.” He looks at the Captain and returns to the recliner where he leans towards Steve who swallows down his anxiety. “Do you care for Loki?”

Steve blinks. “Yes, I love him,” he replies immediately, not sure why this admission is so easy to make to Thor.

Thor gives a relieved smile, “good. He deserves someone like you.”

“I don’t know about that. He made it very clear that he doesn’t want to see me anymore.”

“He has said as much about me over the centuries and yet he never wandered far, but lets talk about happier things. Did Loki tell you of the time he turned my skin orange?”

Day 154

Steve wakes up on the couch. He quickly looks around and notes that Thor must have left sometime during the night. It was nice hearing Thor talk about his brother even though thinking about Loki makes his heart ache. He wants Loki back, wants back the life they briefly shared.

Day 155

“Has he given you everything?” Thanos asks.

“There is nothing left. But there is something else. The Aether my lord.”

“Do you have what you need?”

“Yes.”

“Then finish it and retrieve the Aether,” Thanos tells The Other with a smile.

He can hear Malekith’s screams from where he sits on his throne. When they come to an abrupt stop, he grins.

Day 156

“Make contact with Ronin. Tell him it is time. I want the orb brought to me. Locate the other stones. The gauntlet will be complete.”
“And what of the scepter?” The other asks.

Thanos grins, “I am sure with the proper motivation Loki can be persuaded to bring it to me.”

Day 157

Steve steps out of the safe house and heads out on his morning run. Getting back into a routine is helping him and his talk with Thor gave him a lot to think about.

_He made it very clear that he doesn’t want to see me anymore._

_He has said as much about me over the centuries and yet he never wandered far._

When Steve woke up after the ice he struggled to adapt to the new world. He signed on with SHIELD only because he had no where else to go and knowing Peggy started the organization made it seem like the right thing to do. But now he is not so sure. Is this really what he wants? Especially if it means having to give up the man he loves? But for now though, he has to focus on seeing if he can even get Loki back.

Day 158

“Dammit Rogers! Clint do you have eyes on cap?”

“Negative. He threw his shield then went chasing after a group of 6 of them down an alley. Heading that way right now.”

There are several moments of silence as Natasha waits to hear from Clint.

"I've got him. He's ok."

_This time, she thinks to herself._

Loki steps back away from the edge of the building he is standing on. He frowns as he watches Steve emerge from the building next door, covered in dust. The god can just make out a cut on the blondes cheek, but otherwise he looks unharmed. It had been close, but he was able to disarm several of the men before Steve reached them. He is fairly certain the Captain did not see him.

Day 159

“Hey, did you have dinner yet? I can bring over a pizza or what ever you want,” Natasha greets as soon as Steve answers his phone.

“No, I mean yeah, I already ate,” the blonde lies hoping to get off the phone. He really doesn’t feel like being sociable. All he wants is to continue laying on the couch flipping through his sketch books. Right about now, he wishes he had some of that Asgardian mead.
Chapter 30

The Art Of Falling Apart
Soft Cell

The Art Of Falling Apart
Falling through at the seams
Living life in a dream
Even smiles make a lie
And I smile all the time
I'm skilled at the art
Of falling apart
It's the holding together
Together forever
Trying all of the vices
Is what's doing the damage
All the good things are bad things
And I'm paying the prices
I'm skilled at the art
Of falling apart
It's the holding together
Together forever
I'm covered in bruises
From mixing with losers
It's the black and the blue
That's seeing me through
My cigarette diet
Means my throat hurts like hell
My friends say I'm dying
But I do it so well

Day 160

Natasha pounds on the door to the safe house and stands glaring at Steve when he finally opens it. She had given up trying to call him after the 5th time and headed straight over after Stark filled her in on what happened.

"I don't want to hear it," he tells her before she can get a word out.

"You don't want to.... well too bad Rogers!" the diminutive woman snarls. She can see how he is avoiding eye contact, staring pointedly over her shoulder and she can tell by the twitch in his hand that he wants to shut the door in her face so she makes the conscious effort to reign back her anger. “Ok, sorry. Can I come in?”

Steve glances at her for a moment but says nothing, immediately averting his eyes again. “I just want
to talk. That’s all,” she implores.

The captain steps away from the door to allow Natasha in to the home. She enters but then waits for the blonde to lead the way to the small living room. This way she can better observe his newest injuries. She takes note of the slight limp he is trying to conceal and the stiff way he holds his arm. The gash across his cheek is not so easy to hide.

"So how bad is your bike?" she asks cautiously.

Steve relaxes noticeably with the subject directed away from his injuries, "it'll be ok. At the shop now. Some scratches, other minor damage. Should have it back next week."

"That's....good," Natasha answers, not entirely sure she believes it. Steve has been reckless since coming back and this latest incident tells her it's not just limited to missions.

"I was looking over some of the data from your last mission," he begins. "I think there are some good leads to pursue. I plan on talking to Fury about setting up a strike team."

Although she doesn't react outwardly, Natasha is mentally working through what to say to keep Steve from being set off. His temper is so short these days. She has to strike a balance between appeasing him and keeping him from hurting himself more. What she tells him is, "I'll talk to him. See what he says."

Steve narrows his eyes at her knowing what she is doing. "You guys don't need to keep treating me like this."

"Like what Steve?"

"Like I'm some broken....thing, useless. Like I can't be trusted to do my job."

"We don't think that. But you have to agree that your...... focus is not where it should be. I'm not sure planning a major operation is the right thing for you at this moment."

Steve’s face turns stoney and his eyes are cold. "I see," is all he says.

Natasha knows she has pushed him too far today and so she gets up and heads to the door, "I'm worried Steve. That's all."

"Hmmmm...." is all the response she gets in return.

When she finally leaves Steve throws himself down on his bed and stares at the ceiling. He knows she is just worried about him. And he knows he has been reckless and this time he really could have been killed, but its finally working. He is sure of what he saw just before the crash. That flash of green could only mean one thing.

Day 161

“Why are you showing us this again? We’ve already been over these videos.”

“We all have, but look, just there,” Alexander Pierce states as he pauses the image on the screen.

“What are we looking at?”

Pierce pulls up another video and puts it next to the other on the screen. Once again he pauses the
image. He pulls up a third video, “this was taken by a security camera near where Captain Rogers crashed his motorcycle yesterday. When he pauses this image, it becomes very clear what they are looking at.

Pierce gives a small smile, “I believe we have our way to locate the alien Loki.”

“And you are confident that the alien is following Captain Rogers?”

“Yes I am.”

Day 162

“It’s like he doesn’t care anymore. He came back a changed man,” Tony says as he looks at Clint, Natasha and Bruce.

“Of course he did. Look how long he spent with that psychopath,” Clint responds. “Are we sure he isn’t being mind controlled?”

Bruce removes his glasses and begins cleaning the lenses on his shirt tail. “I’m pretty confident he is not under the scepters control.”

“Loki’s control you mean. He may have used the scepter to do it, but it was all Loki.”

“Clint, arguing semantics is not going to help right now. I don’t believe Steve is being mind controlled.”

“Then how do you explain how he is acting?” Tony interjects.

“Everyone is assuming that the way Steve is acting is unusual, but is it really? I mean we’ve known the guy what?.... A few months? Have you read his history?”

“I didn’t have to read it Bruce. I grew up hearing how amazing he was from my old man. You’d think the great Captain America walked on water,” Stark snaps.

Natasha has been sitting quietly, observing the conversation, “No, I think Bruce has a point. If you read his file, this isn’t really all that different from what he did to rescue his friend back in the war.”

“Its not even close to the same!” Clint argues. “He went to rescue his friend. This is something different. He’s reckless, obsessed with Loki, dangerous.”

“My point exactly. Think for a minute about what he did. Volunteering for the Super Soldier program.... No one else survived the process, before or after him. When he went after Barnes he went behind enemy lines, alone, to rescue his friend. He didn’t even know if Barnes was alive. He throws himself into these dangerous situations over and over again. Like he’s tempting fate.”

Bruce frowns at Natasha, “doesn’t seem to value his own life very much does he?”

“So what.....we have a suicidal Super Soldier on our hands?” Tony asks. “What are we supposed to do about that?”

“I don’t think he’s suicidal, but he’s definitely got a lot going on in his head. Right now we need to watch his back and try to keep him safe until we can figure this out,” Natasha sighs.
“Thor, you seem troubled,” Frigga greets as she approaches her son in the dining hall.

The blonde gives a weak smile in return, “is it that obvious?”

“Only to those who know you well. Now tell me what has you so concerned.”

“Have you spoken to Loki?”

Frigga turns away as she decides what to reveal. “Why do you ask? Have you spoken to him?”

“I have not seen him since the Chitauri came.” He pauses trying to read his mothers expression. Frigga looks at her son, but says nothing. She knows he will grow impatient and will tell her what is on his mind soon enough.

“I did not pay enough attention to what was going on with Loki. I allowed my pride to blind me to the pain that he felt. I didn’t realize that his tricks and sharp words hid so much. Even when he fell from the bifrost I did nothing to better understand him. It was only when I saw him with Captain Rogers that I began to understand, that I wanted to know more. Even then it was only to satisfy my petty jealousy.”

“Loki is a complicated man. He has suffered much and borne it all with great dignity, but it is more than any should have to,” Frigga responds as her eyes begin to moisten.

Thor reaches his hand out and places it on his mothers. “I have failed him.”

“No more than I. We have all failed him and now I don’t know that he can trust another to love him.”

Thor narrows his eyes and scrutinizes his mothers face, “you have spoken to him. Does the All Father know?”

“I have and no he does not. Loki has not settled his crimes against the throne and so I keep his visits secret from Odin.”

“Captain Rogers, Steve, he loves Loki. I could not wish for a better partner for him. I do not understand why Loki simply does not go to him.”

Frigga favors her son with a sad smile, “sometimes we are so busy looking at the past that we cannot see our future.”
Eyes of a Stranger  
Queensrÿche

All alone now  
Except for the memories  
Of what we had and what we knew  
Every time I try to leave it behind me  
I see something that reminds me of you  
Every night the dreams return to haunt me  
Your rosary wrapped around your throat  
I lie awake and sweat, afraid to fall asleep  
I see your face looking back at me, looking back at me  
And I raise my head and stare  
Into the eyes of a stranger  
I've always known that the mirror never lies  
People always turn away  
From the eyes of a stranger  
Afraid to know what  
Lies behind the stare  
Is this all that's left  
Of my life before me  
Straight jacket memories, sedative highs  
No happy ending like they've always promised  
There's got to be something left for me  
And I raise my head and stare  
Into the eyes of a stranger  
I've always known that the mirror never lies  
People always turn away  
From the eyes of a stranger  
Afraid to know what  
Lies behind the stare (Lies behind my stare)  
How many times must I live this tragedy  
How many more lies will they tell me  
All I want is the same as everyone  
Why am I here, and for how long  
And I raise my head and stare  
Into the eyes of a stranger  
I've always known that the mirror never lies  
People always turn away  
From the eyes of a stranger  
Afraid to know what  
Lies behind the stare
Day 164

Steve rolls to his left just as a bullet flies past him. Any other time he would have used his shield to deflect the bullets while he advanced, but he purposely left his shield at home. He tries to tell himself it is because it makes him too recognizable and this is not a SHIELD mission.

He rises up to his feet and quickly scans the area. He knows he is playing a dangerous game. He hears the next shot just before it grazes against his arm. It stings, but at least now he has a location. Moving quickly, he dives behind a shipping container and pulls himself up to the top. He works his way forward until he can hear voices. Slowly he edges towards the voices and leans forward to take a look. There are 5 of them. 2 have guns, 1 has a knife and the other 2 he is not sure of. Steve stands and jumps into the middle of them.

Steve grimaces as he touches the wound on his arm. The bullet took a chunk of flesh out, but the bleeding has slowed to more of an ooze. He grabs a bandage and wraps it around his arm, not bothering to clean it.

Day 165

Loki waits outside the safe house for Steve to emerge. These little side trips that the soldier makes at night, without his uniform and shield, they worry the god. Steve is getting more and more aggressive and Loki knows sooner or later he will be seriously injured.

The Captain exits the house and gets on his motorcycle. Loki transforms himself into a crow and follows behind. Steve doesn’t stray far. There is plenty of trouble to get into near the safe house and tonight is no exception. Loki lands on a rooftop and transforms back into his normal visage. He watches the blonde for awhile, always staying out of sight, only advancing when it looks like Steve is in trouble. Even then, the god is careful. He doesn’t want the Captain to see him, but he cannot keep himself away.

Day 166

“Do we have a plan for containing Loki when he is caught? And what do we plan on doing with him when we have him?”

“He would make a good asset if he could be turned.”

“I don’t know how the programming would take, given his alien physiology, but with his magic, think of the possibilities.”

Alexander Pierce speaks up, “I have been working with our friends on a containment unit and way to keep him sedated. It was originally being set up for the Hulk, but with some modifications we should be able to hold him. We just have to find him.”

“Make sure we have someone watching Rogers at all times.”

Day 167
Director Fury knocks on the safe house door and waits. He knows Captain Rogers is there. After a couple of minutes he knocks again, louder. When the Captain still does not answer the door, he makes quick work of picking the lock and goes in.

He finds Steve sitting on the couch with a computer in his lap. “You didn’t answer the door Rogers.”

“I knew you were coming in anyway, so what’s the point?”

The corners of Fury’s mouth turn down ever so slightly as he moves to sit in a chair where he can keep his eye on the door and also Steve at the same time. As he walks behind the couch he glances down at the laptop screen. The Captain appears to be looking up reports on recent mob activity in the city.

“Making plans to go out this evening?” He says gesturing to the laptop.

Steve doesn’t look up, “just keeping up on the news. Is there a point to this visit?”

“I’ve been hearing some rumors and wanted to check them out for myself.”

Steve finally closes the laptop and looks at the Director, irritation clear on his face.

“Those stitches look like they are about ready to come out,” Fury remarks, pointing to a row of neat sutures on Steve’s forearm. “I don’t recall seeing any mention of you needing them in your medical file, but what I did notice was an increase of treatment of other injuries.”

Steve glares at Fury, but stays quiet. “Anyone else would assume you’re not quite as sharp as you were since you came back, but I don’t think that’s the case. Do you?” Still no response from the Captain. “I think we both know what’s going on here.”

“And what is that?” Steve finally responds.

“Why don’t you tell me?”

“I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Steve answers as he puts the laptop on the coffee table and stands, crossing his arms in front of his body.

Anyone else would have been intimidated, but Fury keeps his cool, “well then I suggest you get back in to Dr. Ian immediately and figure it out.”

Day 168

“How are things today Steve?”

The blonde has to fight not to roll his eyes at the now familiar greeting. He takes his usual seat and grabs the same pillow as always. “Not much is going on really,” Steve begins. Dr. Ian gives him a skeptical look, but doesn’t respond.

“Director Fury stopped by yesterday. He has this stupid idea that I’ve been getting injured a lot lately.”

“Is it stupid?”

“Yeah. I mean kinda. I’ve had to get patched up a little more than usual lately, but its not a big deal.”
“Why do you think that is?”

“That its not a big deal or that I have had to be patched up more?” Steve asks to clarify the Doctor’s question.

“Both.”

“In my line of work its normal to get injured. Sometimes its bad sometimes its really nothing. I mean, yeah, I guess I have had a few more trips to the infirmary lately, but I’ve had a lot on my mind.”

“So you’ve been preoccupied is what you’re saying?”

“A little.” Steve goes silent as he stares at his hands. Dr. Ian is patient and allows him the opportunity to come to what he wants to say in his own time.

“I keep thinking I see him. Out of the corner of my eye. Or I’ll see a flash of green and think its him. I miss him,” he stops and takes a breath. “I want our life back.” Steve knows he is not being completely honest with the Doctor. He has been injured more in hopes of drawing Loki out, but he is willing to allow the Doctor to believe Loki is showing up on his own and he is getting hurt because he is distracted.

But of course Dr. Ian is not fooled. “Steve, do I need to be concerned about you hurting yourself?”

“No! No, I’m fine. Really,” Steve insists. “I’ll be more careful.”

Day 169

Natasha strolls into Steve’s room in the infirmary just as he is pulling on his shirt. She has just enough time to see the large bruise across his back. She quickly schools her face into a look of nonchalance as she tosses a couple of sheets of paper on the bed next to him.

"Did you know that since you started back on active duty you've had 3 concussions, 8 broken ribs, a sprained ankle, a punctured lung, 2 black eyes and a total of 164 stitches? That's not counting all the stuff you didn't come in for. Makes a girl think maybe you've lost your edge Rogers."

"I'm fine Nat," he responds, keeping his back to her.

"Are you sure?" She steps forward and places her hand on his arm, "Steve....."

"Don't. Don't you start on me too." She withdraws her hand and exits the room without another word. She knows he has been going out on his own in the evenings, missions that are not assigned or sanctioned by SHIELD. He may not wear the uniform or carry the shield, but she knows exactly what he has been doing.
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Steve has a break down and Loki makes an admission.

Chapter 32

Rest In Pieces
Saliva

Look at me, my depth perception must be off again
'Cause this hurts deeper than I thought it did
It has not healed with time
It just shot down my spine
You look so beautiful tonight
Remind me how you laid us down
And gently smiled before you destroyed my life
Would you find it in your heart?
To make this go away
And let me rest in pieces (Let me rest in pieces)
Would you find it in your heart?
To make this go away
And let me rest in pieces (Let me rest in pieces)
Look at me, my depth perception must be off again
You got much closer than I thought you did
I'm in your reach
You held me in your hands
Would you find it in your heart?
To make this go away
And let me rest in pieces (Let me rest in pieces)

Day 170

Queen Frigga steps from seemingly nowhere into Director Fury’s office.

“Ma’am,” he greets when he see’s her.

“Director. Heimdall has been keeping me apprised of Captain Rogers activities. I am concerned with what he is reporting.”

Fury frowns at the Queen for a brief moment before she continues. “I am worried for his safety. He is integral to the future of the nine realms and getting himself killed is not an option.”
“Do you know that for sure?” Fury asks, expression unreadable as usual. “Isn’t it possible that Captain Rogers death is what has to happen?”

The Director is impressed with the Queens restraint when she responds. “You’re right, I don’t know that for sure, but I am not willing to watch him kill himself either.”

“What do you suggest? I already tried talking to him about it.”

The Queen rises to her full regal height, “then try again. And if that doesn’t work, try talking to Loki.”

Day 171

Steve’s apartment is dark with all the blinds closed and the curtains drawn. Loki wants it that way. He hasn’t moved from the bed all day. He pulled one of Steve’s shirts out of the closet and has it wrapped in his hands.

Over the past several days he has gone through every inch of the small apartment. The more he looked, the more he hurt, until he couldn’t take it any longer. And yet he continues to stay there night after night.

Day 172

“The Aether has been secured,” The other announces as he approaches Thanos’ throne. “And Ronan will have the orb soon,”

Thanos doesn’t respond.

“And Loki?” The Other prompts.

“He will come to us in time.”

Day 173

Natasha pushes Steve inside the door as soon as he opens it. “Steve you have to stop this.”

“Stop what?”

“This!” She points to his black eye, the bruising showing on his arm, the split lip and the stitches that she knows are under his shirt.

“What is it Rogers? What are you trying to accomplish?”

Steve looks away and closes his eyes while he takes a deep breath to steady himself. She leads him over to the couch and urges him to sit next to her.

“Maybe…” his voice cracks and he pauses. “Maybe if…. Maybe he’ll come back, come to me if…. “

When Steve doesn’t continue, Natasha leans forward, “if what Steve?”
“If I get hurt again,” he whispers.

“Oh Steve, this has to stop. You have to stop. You’re going to get yourself killed.”

He looks at her blankly.

“Is that what you want? If you can’t have Loki you don’t want to live?” She questions, trying to keep her voice calm and soothing despite her growing worry.

He avoids looking at her, “If that’s what it takes.”

“No,” Natasha tells him. “I will not allow you to do this. When I report to Fury you will be relieved of duty again.”

“You can’t do that!” he cries out. “You can’t. Without him, I have nothing else. I am nothing else.”

“You have plenty. You have all of us. We are your team, your family,” she pleads placing her hand on his knee.

He turns to her and with a scowl snarls out, “I was made for only one thing. I am a soldier made to fight. That’s all I’ve been since I was made into this.”

“So that’s all there is to you now? Just a soldier? What happened to plain old Steve Rogers?”

“He’s gone. Loki was the only one who saw me for anything else. And I don’t want to be that without him.”

“Steve…..”

“No Tasha. I can’t, okay? I can’t be Steve. Not right now. And if he doesn’t come back, maybe not ever.”

She pulls him in and holds him. “I know it hurts,” she murmurs. He clutches at her as the grief overwhelms him.

“He left me. Why? What did I do wrong? I don’t understand,” the soldier sobs against her.

“Shhhhh…its ok. You didn’t do anything wrong,” she soothes, stroking her hand through his hair, allowing him to cry.

When he finally settles down, he pulls back and looks at her sheepishly. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to fall apart on you.”

“Its ok Rogers, it’ll be our little secret. And I won’t tell anyone that you are an ugly crier,” she smiles.

They sit together for awhile longer until she is sure Steve will be able to sleep. And then she slips out and closes the door behind herself. She stands just outside the door and leans casually against the wall.

“You have to end this. He’s going to get killed if this doesn’t stop.”

“I cannot Widow,” Loki tells her from the shadow of the stair well.

“Coward,” is all she says as she leaves.
Day 174

Fury finds Loki outside of the safe house.

"You look like shit."

"Thanks," Loki responds drily. After a minute with nothing else he adds, "is there a point to this visit?"

"Just trying to figure out why, for such a smart guy, you're acting so dumb."

"Excuse me?"

“When was the last time you slept?”

Loki shrugs noncommittally.

“I vaguely remember a conversation where you told Captain Rogers that you tend towards nightmares when you are conflicted.”

The god narrows his eyes at the director but still says nothing.

“I just wonder what you could possibly be conflicted over. You got what you wanted didn't you? I assume you must have since you brought the Captain back. But then I get to thinking and I have to ask myself why you would still be hanging around if you already got what you wanted. The whimsical part of me likes to think you are still here because you actually care about him. But I don't indulge that part of myself very often.”

Loki glares at Fury.

The Director just keeps talking. "Your mom's a pretty smart lady, but when she told me you would need Captain Rogers, I was skeptical. I mean, you are all the stuff of legends, what could a human, even one like Rogers, do to help you. I'm not sure if you got what you needed from him or not, but since you keep hanging around, I'd venture to guess not.”

Loki tries not to react outwardly when he hears that Fury has spoken with his mother.

“But now I’m going have to tell the Captain that he is about to be benched again. He's no good to me like this and no good to me dead. So I guess I have to ask, what are you going to do about it?”

"What would you have me do? His team mates distrust him because of me. They don't approve of our... association."

"No, they don't trust you. They don't know you, but Cap does and I tend to trust his judgment."

"And what of the others? They haven't seemed inclined to trust his judgment thus far."

"It may not seem like it, but you have allies in this."

Loki just scoffs in reply, which antagonizes Fury even more.

"How do you think I knew to find you here?"
"Agent Romanov I presume."

"That's right. And trust me, Natasha Romanov is a women you want on your side. Banner has seen what Rogers is doing to himself and I think he knows why," Loki narrows his eyes at fury at this, "so he'll play along."

"And what of Barton and Stark? I don't see either of them being easily swayed."

"You're right. Tony is a hot head but I am betting that a visit from your mom and Thor will set him right. As for Barton, I don't know that he will ever be able to trust you, but he is a company man and will do his job. The question is what happens now?"

“You assume he would even want me. That he will not reject me in favor of his team.”

“You make it seem like its an either/or situation. He can be an avenger, but cannot be with you? Things are not always so black and white. There may be more than 2 choices here. “

“True, but there are other considerations. There are certain…… events, in my past, that…….. are…….. difficult to overcome.“

“Sounds to me like you’re scared.”

“I think the word is terrified, Director.”

If Fury is surprised by this admission he doesn’t show it. “I would suggest visiting your mother. She really is a smart lady."

"Yes, she truly is," With that Loki opens Yggdrasil and disappears.

Director Fury looks at the spot where the god had been standing for a moment then he turns and heads back to the Triskellion. He’ll give it a few more days to see if Loki does something before he relieves the Captain from duty again.
Enter the Winter Soldier

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little shorter than usual so I will be posting another longer one later today.

Chapter 33

Shed Some Light
Shine Down

I'm falling apart again
And I can't find a way to make amends
And I'm looking in both directions
But it's make believe, it's all pretend
So, Shed some light on me
And hold me up in disbelief
And shed some light on me
And tell me something that I'll believe in

It's innocence within the maze
But I have chosen the wrong way
I'm still getting over who I was
There's no sense of trust, there's no definition of love
So, Shed some light on me
And hold me up in disbelief
And shed some light on me
And tell me something that I'll believe in
I know now, it's not who you are
It's who you know
And I see clearly now, which way to go
I remember the way I fell from above
And I recall the way I was
So, Shed some light on me
And hold me up in disbelief
And shed some light on me
And tell me something that I'll believe in
Day 175

Loki sits next to Frigga, his body close to hers as he leans his head on her shoulder. She strokes his hair lightly as she hums softly. “What did the fates show you?” He asks.

He doesn’t wait for her to respond even though he can feel her body tense, “they showed me him. What do they want from me? I have ripped out my very heart and sacrificed it to them. I can't live like this.”

Frigga doesn’t know what to say to him to ease his pain. “Did they tell you I needed him? Is that why you went to Fury?”

“Yes.”

“Everything I have endured, all that I have done, and it is not enough. How much more must I suffer for the fates to be satisfied?”

“I am so sorry my son.” She pulls him just a little closer.

Day 176

Steve drops the unconscious man on the ground and shakes off Iron Man’s grip from his arm before he turns and walks out of the construction area. Tony starts to follow after him, but Natasha gives a small shake of her head and then follows after the soldier herself. She finds him standing at the edge of a large pit. She follows his gaze down, “how’s your side?”

Steve twists slightly so he can look at the wound. The bleeding has slowed already and he doubts it will need stitches. “Its fine.”

“I thought it may be worse, the way you reacted. Tony had to pull you off that guy.”

He doesn’t answer, just continues to rake his eyes over the pit, trying to figure out where Loki may be hiding. Natasha watches him and when she sees the slight tightening around his mouth, she looks back out along his sightline until she sees the shadows where the god is standing.

Day 177

"Director Fury, you need to update us on the status of the alien."

Fury is standing in front of the images of the world security council, having been summoned that morning.

"I assume you mean Loki. As of right now his status is unknown."

"Find him and bring him in. We need to find out everything we can about these aliens. We already have a team on standby."

"First of all, I have no way to contact him to ask him to come in. Even if I could, I doubt he would. And second, what kind of team? What are you planning on doing with him?"
"The alien will be examined so we can ascertain his physiology and to study the source of his powers."

"It almost sounds as though you plan on dissecting him," Fury questions.

"How we gain the information we seek is not your concern."

"Ok, well that still doesn't change the fact that I cannot contact him."

"The video files from the battle on the helicarrier have been recovered. We know Loki was there and that he saved the Captain. We believe that with sufficient motivation he will show up again and he can be apprehended."

"What are you getting at?"

"Do you have another suggestion. Another way to get to him that you aren't revealing?"

"No"

"Then you are dismissed."

When Fury walks out the council members continue to talk amongst themselves.

"Have him watched. If he can contact the alien he will do it now."

"In the mean time, I think its time to call in the asset. Give him his new mission. Make sure he understands Captain Rogers is expendable."

Back in his office Fury grabs a small device from his desk and heads to one of the server rooms. Once there, he plugs the device in and uses it to search Shields systems and copy any files that were recently accessed by anyone with his clearance level or above. He needs to find out just what the council has planned for Loki. He has to remind himself to thank Stark for this little bit of tech. It doesn’t take long for the files to be copied. He uses the device to cover his electronic tracks and then takes it and leaves the Triskellion. He heads to a safe house so he can look over the files.

When he is finished, he calls Natasha. He didn’t find anything on what the council plans for Loki, but he found something else.

Day 178

Natasha takes the seat across from Fury. They are sitting in a corner booth so they can both keep an eye on the restaurant. The waiter comes and they both order a drink.

She places her phone on the table and uses it to scan for listening devices. When it comes up clear, she nods at the Director. He had already completed his own scan before she arrived, but appreciates the confirmation none the less.

“Have you ever heard of the winter soldier?” Fury asks.
She keeps her features blank even though inwardly she flinches. “You know I have. Why?”

“He’s on the move.”

“He’s a ghost.”

“He looks pretty alive to me,” he says as he hands her a picture from a file. “I need you to find him.”

“Why? What does SHIELD want with him?”

“SHIELD already has him. He’s on the payroll. I need to know who he is targeting.” Fury watches the Widow closely for a reaction at finding out SHIELD has the Winter Soldier. There is none.

“You don’t already know? You’re the director.”

“There are a lot of things going on within SHIELD right now. Not all of it good. He’s been activated, but there is no official target in his file.”

Natasha scans the file, “he’s another super soldier, what am I supposed to do with him when I find him?”

“Figure out who he’s after and report back.”

“And how do you expect me to do that?”

“You’re going to need a super soldier of your own. I’ll see about finding you one,” Fury says wryly as he stands to leave after dropping some cash on the table.

Natasha sits and finishes her drink as she wonders if Steve is really up to helping her with the Winter Soldier.
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Tony is helpful. Sort of.

Chapter 34

One

Metallica

I can’t remember anything
Can’t tell if this is true or dream
Deep down inside I feel the scream
This terrible silence stops me
Now that the war is through with me
I’m waking up, I cannot see
That there’s not much left of me
Nothing is real but pain now
Hold my breath as I wish for death
Oh please, God, wake me
Back in the womb it’s much too real
In pumps life that I must feel
But can’t look forward to reveal
Look to the time when I’ll live
Fed through the tube that sticks in me
Just like a wartime novelty
Tied to machines that make me be
Cut this life off from me
Hold my breath as I wish for death
Oh please, God, wake me
Now the world is gone, I’m just one
Oh God, help me Hold my breath as I wish for death
Oh please, God, help me
Darkness
Imprisoning me
All that I see
Absolute horror
I cannot live
I cannot die
Trapped in myself
Body my holding cell
Landmine
Has taken my sight
Taken my speech
Taken my hearing
Taken my arms
Taken my legs
Taken my soul
Left me with life in hell

Day 179

Steve opens the door and lets Fury in after only a single knock. The blonde has been pacing the room since Fury called to tell him he was coming over to talk. Steve assumes the Director is there to place him back on leave and so he is surprised when the man pulls a file out of his jacket and sits at the dining room table looking expectantly at the soldier.

Steve takes the seat across from Fury and pulls the file over in front of himself. He glances up at the Director briefly before he opens it and begins to scan the documents.

Pulling out a photo, he flips it so Fury can see, “no photos without this mask?”

When Fury responds in the negative, Steve frowns slightly. “Not a lot of hard information here on this guy. Why bring this to me?”

The Director pulls the last page out of Steve’s hand and places it on the table with his finger resting on a paragraph near the middle of the page.

Steve reads it and his eyes widen. “I didn’t think Erskine’s serum was ever replicated.”

“To my knowledge it wasn’t.” Fury gathers all the pages and puts them back into the file, “I need you and Natasha to find out who his target is.”

“If he was tasked by SHIELD, shouldn’t you know? You’re the Director.”

Day 180

Natasha and Steve sit on the couch in the safe house with everything they have on the Winter Soldier spread out on the coffee table. Admittedly, its not much, even with the addition of Natasha’s notes, everything she could remember from years of rumors and one nearly fatal encounter.

“I’m not sure where to even start with this,” Steve sighs, running a hand through his hair.

She tells him about her one encounter with the assassin, culminating with showing him the scar where his bullet went right through her. “Word is he’s credited with 20 kills over 60 years. Never could find out who his handler was. I should be surprised that SHIELD is holding his leash now, but somehow, I’m not. I set up a meeting with a contact, from before. Hopefully I can get a place to start looking. If he’s moving on a target, we won’t have much time.”

The corners of Steve’s mouth turn down, “guess I’ll just sit here and wait.”

Natasha smiles at the soldier. “You’re here for the muscle Rogers. Everyone knows I’m the brains.” She gets a small smile in return. “I’ll let you know what I find out.”
Day 181

Steve picks up his phone from the coffee table and answers it on the 4th ring, “Rogers.”

“Hey, how about we get some coffee?” Natasha asks. “My treat. I’ll come pick you up in 5.” She disconnects the call before he can respond.

Steve frowns at the phone and then pockets it as he grabs his coat. There is a knock a few moments later and he opens it to find Natasha standing there. “That was quick.”

“Yeah well, I really want some coffee. Lets go.”

She leads him out to the street and gets in a 4 door car that looks to be about 10-15 years old, silver with a small dent on the back passenger side. Steve raises an eyebrow at her, but gets in. She drives through the city on a meandering path until she comes to a busy shopping mall. Once she parks, she leads him to a coffee shop where they order drinks and sit in a back corner booth. “Care to tell me what this is all about?”

“Just being extra careful. I met with my contact. He couldn’t give me much, but he did say there is a rumor that the winter soldier’s last hit was a high ranking military scientist. He was working in a lab here.” She produces a set of photos from her pocket and slides them across the table to the soldier. “Look familiar?”

“It should. I went through basic training there,” he answers, furrowing his brows together. “That base has been shut down for 20 years, how long ago was that scientist killed?”

“A little over 2 years ago.”

The Captain looks up from the pictures clearly surprised by her statement. “I guess that would warrant a look. When do we go?”

Day 182

Steve and Natasha pull up outside the gates of Camp Lehigh as the sun is getting low in the sky. The gates are chained shut, the ‘no trespassing’ sign dangling from one corner. Steve gets out of Natasha’s car and uses his shield to smash the pad lock. They go in and walk around the grounds. Steve can all but see his old self struggling to run under the weight of his pack. Not much has changed on the base, but everything looks a little run down, a bit unkempt as weeds have taken over.

Alexander Pierce is sitting in his kitchen when his phone beeps. He picks it up and checks the alert. He grabs his laptop, pulling up a satellite map and turns the screen to the dark hair man sitting across from him, “how quickly can you get there?”

The man looks at the screen and does some quick calculations in his head, its not far. “45 minutes.”

“You have 40. Get there now.”
“Anything catch your eye?” Natasha asks.

“Everything looks the same,” he answers as he turns in a slow circle. “Except that,” he adds, pointing to a squat building with a rounded top. “Army regulations state an ordnance bunker cannot be within 500 feet of a barracks.”

They approach the door cautiously. When Steve tries it, it won’t open. He circles around the perimeter, not sure what he is looking for, until he see’s it. Halfway around the north facing side, the dirt is disturbed. He begins feeling the metal exterior of the building looking for seams or a handle, anything that would give access to what he assumes must be a secret entrance. After a few moments he gives up and simply aims a well placed kick to the sheet metal, causing it to dent in significantly, revealing the edges of a cleverly concealed door. He pulls his shield off his back and uses it to bludgeon the metal until it gives way.

Natasha steps forward and shines a light inside where they can see a narrow set of stairs leading down into the dark. “After you,” she tells him. Steve starts down the stairs, leading with his shield. At the bottom they follow a short hallway to another door with a keypad next to it. Natasha hands Steve her flashlight and pulls out her phone. She opens a screen and points the phone’s camera at the keypad, where it reveals which numbers have been touched by illuminating the residual oils left from fingerprints. From there it is a simple matter of trying the sequence a couple of times and she has the door sliding open.

As soon as Steve steps in the room, banks of overhead lights turn on, revealing a lab complete with computers, a bunch of equipment Steve cannot identify and a large metal pod. Natasha moves to the pod and works the mechanism on the side causing it to open. He can’t explain why, but looking at the inside of it makes Steve’s skin crawl.

Moving away from the pod, Natasha pulls out a thumb drive and plugs it in to the nearest computer. Once she has access, she begins to download any files she can find. While she focuses on her task, Steve walks around trying to make sense of the equipment, but he is hopelessly lost and so he settles for just poking at a robot arm that reminds him of Tony’s robot Dum E. The arm whirs to life and begins to move test tubes from one rack to another, causing Steve to jump back out of the way.

“You probably shouldn’t touch anything else,” Natasha calls out to him with a grin.

“Yeah, I think you’re……” He stops when he hears it. A faint beeping, followed by footsteps running back towards the stairs. He leaps over a table, upending it on its side before he grabs Natasha, throwing both of their bodies behind it. The explosion isn’t big and he counts himself lucky that this didn’t end like the last time he was caught in an explosion with Natasha.

Loki crouches behind a tree and watches the figure of a man go down the stairs that Steve and Natasha disappeared down not too long before. He see’s the man run back out the door just before there is a muffled explosion from beneath the building. Loki immediately teleports to the base of the stairs to check on Steve. He is relieved to see the damage is not that great and teleports back to his hiding spot so he can look for the man, confident that Steve and Natasha will be able to get out easily.

The man moves silently through the trees. He can see his target just ahead, crouched down, peering intently at the ordnance building. He pulls out a knife and throws it, intending to injure his target so he can then incapacitate him and call for extraction. He isn’t sure why Pierce thought this guy was
going to be a problem.

Inside the lab Natasha turns to the Captain. “I think it’s time for us to get out of here,” the spy tells him as she retrieves the thumb drive from the computer.

Before she can move towards the door they hear a series of explosions above them. Dust starts to fall through the cracks that form in the concrete ceiling. The structure begins to groan as the lights start to flicker off. Steve has just enough time to grab Natasha by the arm and shove her into the still open pod. He slams down the lid, pulls the shield out of its harness and throws his body under the pod using the shield to block the falling concrete.

Loki jumps to his feet when the building rumbles and begins to cave in on itself. He feels a sharp pain in his thigh and looks down to see a knife imbedded in his leg. The god turns towards his attacker and gets a brief glimpse of the same man from before.

He only hesitates for a moment before he pulls the knife out of his leg and uses his magic to shatter it. Sparing a quick look back at his attacker, he sends a wall of green flame towards him and then disappears.

Inside the pod Natasha is just able to reach her phone and activate a distress signal with a direct link to Tony Stark. The billionaire responds immediately and his voice issues from the phone, “what’s the situation?”

“Oh you know, another day trip with Cap, another building collapse,” she jokes, trying to push down the concern for Steve.

“I’m starting to think I can’t let the two of you hang out together anymore,” he quips as his suit assembles around him. “How are you guys? Injuries? Do you need medical?”

“I’m fine, not sure about Steve though. I can’t see him. Just get here quick.”

“So no stopping for coffee?” Tony jokes back, knowing that this is Natasha’s way of deflecting fear.

“Not this time. And don’t invite any friends either,” she responds.

Tony wonders to himself why she wouldn’t want to call in help from SHIELD, but he knows she must have her reasons, so he focuses on tracking her signal and puts more power into his thrusters.

Loki stands just to the side of the collapsed building and focuses his magic on stabilizing the debris. Carefully, he begins to pull twisted pieces of metal away. Up in the tree line, the dark haired man watches the god work. He knows he will have to adjust his strategy if he is to capture the man alive. After a few minutes, he leaves.

As Tony approaches the spot where Natasha’s signal is coming from he can see Loki kneeling in a pile of concrete and metal. The god grabs a loose piece, the size of a door and tosses it aside. When
Tony lands and can see that the god is covered in dust and has blood coming from a wound on his leg. Loki turns to Tony, “Stark, help me get them out!”

Even though Tony really dislikes the guy he moves to help for his team mates’ sakes. “Can’t you just magic them out?”

Loki gives the billionaire a venomous look and then moves to pull out another section of building. Up close Tony can see that his hands are bleeding, scraped raw from his efforts. Quickly Tony scans the remaining debris and begins to remove the sections that will allow the quickest and safest access to where Natasha’s signal is coming from.

The two men work together until they find a metal pod. Through the small window in the top, Tony can see Natasha looking out. He scrambles to clear the top and then wrenches the lid open as Loki leans in and pulls her out. “Where is Steve?” he demands.

“Underneath,” she tells him as she sucks in a breath.

“Steve? Cap?” Tony calls out. There is no response. “Steve!” he tries again.

Loki lunges for the pod, intent on ripping it out of the hole so he can get to the Captain. “Wait!” Tony yells as he has Jarvis confirm there is a heart beat and heat signature under the pod. “If anything is dislodged and falls, it could kill him.”

The god looks ready to lash out at Tony and so Natasha places a hand on his arm, “let Tony get him out.” To Tony she says, “we need a place to take him.” No matter what his condition is, he will have to be moved and right now a civilian hospital or one of SHIELD’S facilities is not a good option.

“We’ll take him to the tower. Jarvis, ready the medical floor and have Dr. Banner meet us on the roof,” Tony responds without shifting focus away from the pod. He works to carefully remove any concrete that may be an issue and then reaches for the pod. “I’m gonna lift this out of the way. Loki, be ready to grab him, I’m not sure how stable this is.”

The god moves forward as Tony lifts the pod. The first thing they see is Steve’s shield. Loki’s heart stops for a moment and then it lurches back to life as he moves forward to scoop the fallen soldier into his arms.

Tony looks at Natasha, “do you need a lift?” he asks, holding out his arms.

“Yeah sure. It’ll be fun,” she answers despite the worry on her face.

Turning to Loki, he asks, “can you find the tower?”

Loki looks down at Steve’s still form before answering, “I’ll meet you there.” And then he immediately disappears.

When the god arrives on the roof of the tower Bruce is just stepping out of the elevator. The scientist was not expecting to see Loki and is even more surprised to see him holding Steve, who looks to be unconscious.

Bruce lifts both of Steve’s eyelids to look at his pupils and then feels for a pulse. “Let’s get him down to medical, there is a Doctor on standby. Can you carry him?”

Loki begins to stride to the elevator door, “lead the way.”
Once Steve is stabilized the Doctor meets with Natasha, Bruce and Tony. The billionaire refuses to allow Loki in with the Doctor despite his protests. A reassurance from Natasha finally quiets the god enough to step out into the hallway.

“He was very lucky. Some contusions, his ankle is broken in a couple of places. I’ll need to operate to place a couple of pins to help stabilize it. He also inhaled a lot of concrete dust so his lungs are compromised, but I think that’s the worst of it.”

Natasha thanks the Doctor who goes to prep for surgery. She turns to Tony, “we were lucky that Loki was there.”

The billionaire frowns, “were we?”

Natasha looks at Tony blankly. Once the Doctor has left she asks Tony to get her a copy of Steve’s chart. She needs to report back to Director Fury as soon as she updates Loki.
Not sure who to dislike more. Tony or the fates. And I promise to stop beating up Steve and Loki. Soon.

Just One Yesterday
Fall Out Boy

I thought of angels
Choking on their halos
Get them drunk on rose water
See how dirty I can get them
Pulling out their fragile teeth
And clip their tiny wings
Anything you say can and will be held against you
So only say my name
It will be held against you
If heaven’s grief brings hell’s rain
Then I’d trade all my tomorrows for just one yesterday
(I know I’m bad news)
For just one yesterday
(I saved it all for you)
I want to teach you a lesson in the worst kind of way
Still I’d trade all my tomorrows for just one yesterday
(I know I’m bad news)
For just one yesterday
(I saved it all for you)
For just one yesterday
Letting people down is my thing baby
Find yourself a new gig
This town ain’t big enough for two of us
I don’t have the right name
Or the right looks
But I have twice the heart
Anything you say can and will be held against you
So only say my name
It will be held against you
If heaven’s grief brings hell’s rain
Then I’d trade all my tomorrows for just one yesterday
(I know I’m bad news)
For just one yesterday
I want to teach you a lesson in the worst kind of way
If I spilled my guts
The world would never look at you the same way
And I’m here to give you all of my love
So I can watch your face as I take it all away
If heaven’s grief brings hell’s rain
Then I’d trade all my tomorrows for just one yesterday
(I know I’m bad news)
For just one yesterday
(I saved it all for you)
I want to teach you a lesson in the worst kind of way

Day 183

Loki has been lurking in the hallway outside of Steve’s room hoping to get an update on his condition. Tony has refused to tell him anything and Natasha hasn’t been back. She has been spending her time trying to break the encryption on the data she downloaded from Camp Lehigh.

The day nurse nods at the god as she enters the room to check on the patient once again. Ten minutes later she comes out, but pauses before walking away, “he’s asleep right now, but we’ll wake him for lunch in about 2 hours if you wanted to talk to him.”

“And how is he doing?”

“He seems fine. I can’t really say anything more than that,” she answers with an apologetic look.

When she leaves, Loki opens the door to Steve’s room and goes inside. He takes a seat in the chair next to the bed and watches the blonde sleep.

“You came. I knew you would.”

“What?” the god asks, taken by surprise. He must have fallen asleep at some point.

“Tell me what I have to do? Anything Loki. To get you back. There is nothing I won’t do.”

The god just looks at his former lover blankly as his mind races. “Do you want me to give up the avengers? I will Loki. For you. None of this means anything without you.”

Loki recovers enough to respond, “I will not allow you to give this up. You cannot be Captain America with me by your side and the world needs you,” the god reasons.

“What about what I need?” Steve questions desperately. “Do you really think I went into this without knowing what the fallout could be? Do you think I’m that naive? I know what I may have to give up, but I also know what I am not willing to give up and that’s you Loki. So if you want me to give up the shield, just say it and I will.”

“I will not be your undoing.”

“You already are,” Steve whispers. Louder he pleads again, “please Loki. I can give up the avengers I can give up being Captain America. Anything. What I cannot do is keep going forward without
You by my side, but you have to give it a chance. Give us a chance. Let me face the fallout if that happens. It's worth it and it's my decision. If you don't love me......” Steve’s voice breaks, "if you don't love me then say so, but if you do, you owe it to both of us to try and respect my choices.”

“And what of my choices?”

There is a knock on the door, “Captain Rogers?” A nurse calls out just as she opens the door to check his vitals and bring in his lunch tray. Steve looks at the door then back at Loki.

“I’ll be back,” the god says and walks out to the hallway where he vanishes.

Loki stands outside a home on Asgard. It has been many years, but everything looks the same. He wraps his knuckles on the door before he can change his mind.

The petite brunette that opens the door sucks in a breath when she see’s him, “Loki!” She steps slightly out of the home and looks around before quickly grabbing him by the arm and pulling him inside.

Once inside the house, she pulls him into an embrace. He wraps his own arms around her and bends his head to breathe in her scent. “Signe....”

“What are you doing here? Is it safe?” She asks when she finally releases all but his hand. Leading him to a sitting area, she indicates a chair for him and then sits beside him.

“In truth, I am not quite sure what I am doing. I find myself in need of a friend and even though things did not end well between us, I didn’t know where else to go,” he responds looking at her plaintively.

Signe gives Loki a small smile. “I want to apologize, Loki, for…. that night. I should have been a better friend to you. I should have been there for you, through everything that came after and for that, I am truly sorry.”

Loki reaches out and touches her arm, “there is no need. My only regret is that I let my friend slip away.”

She smiles at Loki. Even after all these years she can still read him like a book. There has been no one since him that has been able to get so close to her. Sleeping with him was one of the biggest mistakes of her life, costing her her closest friend. If there is any chance of rekindling that friendship she will gladly do whatever is needed. “I would be your friend again. If you would have me.”

The relief on his face is clear and she smiles. “Would you like something to drink?” He asks as he stands and moves to the kitchen.

Signe follows with a chuckle and watches as the god opens a cupboard and pulls out what he needs to make tea. It has been centuries, but the familiarity of him making them tea in her kitchen is comfortable and welcomed. As he sets water to boil he tells her almost casually, “I have been on Midgard recently. I met someone there.”

Her heart leaps and she smiles, “tell me, what is he like?”

He stares at the water and begins to tell her about Steve. When the water is ready, he finishes making the tea and hands her a cup. “He sounds wonderful, will you marry?”
Loki turns away from her, “did you know I was to marry once before?”

She didn’t know and tells him as much. “His name was Elgin and I killed him.” He tells her of the trauma he suffered at Elgin’s hands. Pushing the words out as though he can push away the memories. His cheeks burn with shame and embarrassment, his hands shake with fear and heartache. “It is hard for me. To trust.”

“Do you love him, your Steve?” she asks gently.

“I find myself confused and unsure how to proceed,” he says, ignoring her question. “He makes me happier than I have ever been, but I am also more frightened than I have ever been. I wonder how long before he realizes what a mistake he is making. I give him my heart and he will surely break it. He has the power to destroy me utterly and completely.”

“What do you want from him?”

“What I want……..what I want is to be with him. Completely with him, without the fear, the doubts. I want to believe that I can trust him, but I cannot stop the voice, Elgin’s voice. He has wormed his way into my mind. Destroying my happiness, over and over. I fight it, I try. I try so hard to be happy and for a while I can be, but then it all comes back without warning and I can’t stop myself from reacting. Some little phrase, a gesture, even just a look and its like I’m there all over again……… I don’t want to lose Steve. I hate that I feel so out of control.”

“Have you told him about…..what happened?” she asks delicately.

Loki looks down at his cup. “No, if he finds out, when he learns just how damaged I am, he will not want me.”

Signe gives him a reproachful look, “Loki, what happened to you, that’s not you. It doesn’t define you.”

“But it does define me. I find myself watching him, staying close, making excuses to justify why I don’t just walk away, while at the same time when he tells me he wants us to be together, I push him away. I don’t understand what is wrong with me.”

“Nothing is wrong with you Loki. You’re scared. That’s understandable, what was done to you, no one should ever have to suffer that way.”

Loki looks at his friend, “what should I do?”

“I’ll tell you what you need to do. You need to go to him and tell him the truth. Tell him how you feel and tell him why you are struggling. If he loves you, he will understand.”

“And if he doesn’t?”

“If he doesn’t, then you come home. To me. I regret not being there for you before, but I will be here for you now.”

Day 184

“Is it enough?”

“Is it too much?”
“He has endured much, but he is not ready yet. There is still work to be done.”

“And if he breaks? If he is not strong enough?”

“He has to be. He is not yet ready.”

The fates turn away from the reflecting pool as the image of Loki fades.

Tony is leaning against the wall outside the Captains door when Loki comes around the corner, it is well past midnight and the halls are deserted, lights dimmed. Tony stands upright when he sees the god. He pulls an envelope out of his jacket and hands it to Loki before walking away.

Loki looks after the billionaire before turning back to the door and entering Steve’s room. The blonde is sleeping and so Loki sits next to the bed. He watches Steve as he considers his options, how best to tell Steve what he must. Curious, Loki opens the envelope and begins to flip through the photographs that he finds inside. He feels sick as he looks at the images of Steve with a dark haired man that bears a passing resemblance to himself. The final image is what pushes him over the edge. The picture of Steve kissing the man while his hand is in his pants.

He sucks in a breath and tries to calm his racing heart.

“You’re back!” The god can hear the smile in the Captains voice.

Loki can hardly bear to look at Steve. He feels like he has been punched in the gut as he stands and slides the pictures back in the envelope. “I was just leaving.”

Steve is confused and it shows on his face. “I don’t understand. Can I…..I just need to know….why are you here then? Is this all just some game to you? Was any of this real? Or is this all part of some messed up scheme of yours?”

Loki seizes on Steve’s words and even though it kills him to say it he answers, “very astute Captain. You were a means to an end. Nothing more. Collateral damage as it were.” Loki keeps his expression blank, even as his heart breaks.

“Collateral…….?” Steve has finally had enough. It hurts, but he buries the hurt under a layer of rage that bubbles to the surface. “Just go then! If that’s what you want then get out and don’t come back! STOP COMING BACK! STOP MAKING ME THINK YOU WANT THIS! I can’t…..”

Steve is starting to hyperventilate. Alarms start sounding as his heart rate spikes and his blood pressure increases. Two nurses burst into the room and start checking the monitors and I.V. lines. In the next moment, the Doctor comes in and quickly injects something in Steve’s thigh.

Steve’s breathing begins to smooth out and within minutes he is stabilized again. Loki observes all the commotion from the corner of the room. He watches as the Doctor pulls out a second vial and injects another drug directly into his I.V. Then he turns to Loki, “what happened here?”

"He was upset, I'm not sure what happened,” he lies. “He couldn't breathe. Will he be ok?” Loki asks, noticing that Steve looks a little drowsy.

"He should be fine. We'll run some tests and keep an eye on him, but I think it best that he not be agitated anymore," the Doctor states, looking pointedly at Loki.

Loki nods, and follows the Doctor out of the room, not sparing another look back at Steve. When
they are both in the hallway the Doctor turns to Loki again. "You know when I was a kid I idolized Captain America. He was like a folk hero, sacrificing himself to save everyone. It was only when I got older that I really understood everything he lost. His friends, his love, everything."

Loki waits patiently for the Doctor to compose the rest of his thoughts. "He and I talked a little earlier tonight. I hate to see him lose anyone else that he cares about. He's a good man."

"Ah, but you see, I am not a good man." Loki sneers before he continues in a quieter voice not entirely sure why he is even having this conversation, "I have done many terrible things."

"None of us are innocent."

“That does not change the facts of what I have done or what he has done.” Loki cannot keep the anger and hurt from seeping into his voice.

The Doctor looks briefly confused. "If that's the case, then why are you here?" He takes one last look at Loki and then walks away.

“That is the question, isn’t it,” Loki remarks to himself as he looks at the envelope in his hands.

Day 185

Loki is sitting in his old rooms on Asgard. It seems so long ago that he called this place home. Everything is as he left it, but nothing is familiar. He barely even recognizes himself any more.

He sits on the bed and pulls the photos out of the envelope again. It hurts just as much as it did the first time he looked at them. He should go to Signe as he promised to, but he knows she will try to change his mind. He will turn himself in to Odin in the morning, allow the Allfather to pass judgment for his crimes against the throne. If he is locked away in Asgard’s dungeons, going back to Steve will not be an option and maybe he can finally get some peace. Setting the pictures down, he wipes away a few errant tears before curling up on his side to try and sleep.

Loki is once again standing in a cave before an underground spring. Facing him are the 3 figures of the fates, features obscured by the faint glow that emanates from each one. The foremost one lifts her head in greeting as he takes a step forward. “Loki, there is still work to be done.”

“I am done. With all of this,” he growls.

Just as before, the figure raises her hand and 3 orbs of light appear above her palm. They twist and spin, suspended in air. The red, white and blue orbs coalesce into one with a blinding flash. As the light dies down only one orb remains, this one green, glowing strong in her hand. "There is still more for you to do."

“No! You ask too much.”

One of the other fates steps forward, “if he dies, all is lost.”

Loki takes a step back. “I cannot continue to protect him.”

The third fate steps forward as well, “if he dies, all is lost.”

Loki’s eyes dart between the three figures as he backs away towards the mouth of the cave. He can
see the entrance to the cave and he steps out into the light with one last look back towards the interior.

Loki wakes slowly, blinking his eyes against the bright light in his room. He sits up and sucks in a breath when he see’s the three glowing figures at the foot of his bed. “If he dies, all is lost.”

“Okay! I’ll go back!” he shouts. He knows the fates are not to be denied. To tempt them is dangerous, to defy them is unthinkable. “I’ll go back,” he cries.
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

Posting an extra chapter this week. Just because. I'll have another longer chapter tomorrow.

Chapter 36

Bullet With Butterfly Wings
The Smashing Pumpkins

The world is a vampire, sent to drain
Secret destroyers, hold you up to the flames
And what do I get, for my pain?
Betrayed desires, and a piece of the game
Even though I know, I suppose I'll show
All my cool and cold, like old job
Despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage
Then someone will say what is lost can never be saved
Despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage
Now I'm naked, nothing but an animal
But can you fake it, for just one more show?
And what do you want?
I want to change
And what have you got, when you feel the same?
Even though I know, I suppose I'll show
All my cool and cold, like old job
Despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage
Then someone will say what is lost can never be saved
Despite all my rage I am still just a rat in a cage
Tell me I'm the only one
Tell me there's no other one
Jesus was the only son, yeah.
Tell me I'm the chosen one
Jesus was the only son for you

Day 186

Loki and Queen Frigga are sitting in her garden. “Will you be going back to Midgard?” she asks.

With a frown Loki looks out at the carefully cultivated grounds, “it would seem I don’t have much choice in the matter. The fates are not yet done with me.”

“When will you leave?”
“In the morning, I’m not ready to face him yet.”

Director Fury strides in to the Triskellion after meeting with Natasha to get an update on the Captains condition. He pauses at the security desk to scan his badge. The guard at the desk is issuing a temporary badge to a man that Fury doesn’t recognize. The Director has spent a lifetime being paranoid and so he takes his time at the scanner.

“Here you are Dr. Harrel. Take the elevator to the left to the 20th floor.” That sends a shock of alarm through the Director. The 20th floor is only used for one thing.

Taking a closer look at the Doctor, Fury then heads directly to his office. He dashes off a quick text to Natasha, “Cap’s doc name?”

It is only a moment before the reply comes back and confirms his suspicions, “Harrel.”

Doctor Harrel is standing in a room surrounded by holographic images. When he was contacted by a Shield agent and asked to come in, he assumed they wanted an update on Captain America’s condition, but they have not asked a single question about his injuries. Instead they question him about the Captain’s visitors. The Doctor describes all of the people that he observed coming and going from the Captain’s room. The one other actual person in the room shows him a picture of a man with shoulder length black hair and green eyes.

“Did you see this man?”

“Yes, he’s been there.”

“Thank you,” Alexander Pierce tells him as he pulls a gun from his jacket and shoots the Doctor in the head.

“Send a team to Stark Tower, its time to flush Loki out. Contact the asset and have him get there.”

Director Fury sits in his office using the same device as before to check for files accessed by high clearance levels. It doesn’t take long for him to get a hit. He immediately starts cleaning out his computer files, knowing his time is limited with Shield. Grabbing some paper files, he makes his way to the garage and heads away from the Triskellion, calling Natasha as he drives.

“You were right Pierce, it looks like we do have a rat in our midst,” one of the council members remarks as the breach in their system shows on their screens.

"If you can get to Loki, you need to warn him to stay out of sight and away from Cap. The Council knows he was-"

Fury is cut off when a black SUV crashes in to the side of his car. The car flips up on the passenger side. He can hear the SUV backing up and he clambers out the window. He leaps from the car just as the SUV rams into it again.
Fury hits the ground running and ducks into an alley, pulling his side arm.

"Fury?!" Natasha calls out when she hears the impact. She listens on the line for a few more seconds, then quickly disconnects the call and disposes of the phone. She knows where Fury will be heading, if he is still alive to make it there.

“Queen Frigga!” The Queen looks to the door where the young messenger has burst into her sitting room. “Heimdall sent me,” he pants. Frigga looks to Loki who is sitting across from her. They both rise and enter Yggdrasil, appearing moments later in front of the gatekeeper.

Director Fury edges towards the mouth of the alley using a trash bin for cover and looks out. The street is crawling with Shield agents. What catches his eye is a lone man standing in the center of the street slowly turning and looking at the surrounding buildings. What grabs his attention is his left arm, bright silver with a red star high on the bicep. The Council has sent the Winter Soldier and so Fury turns and makes his way back down the alley until he reaches a door.

Pulling out a silencer, he screws it to the end of his gun, shoots the lock and kicks the door in. He knows he has to move quickly as he makes his way down the hall way of what looks to be an abandoned office building. He heads towards the back of the building and listens closely at the door for any sounds outside. Hearing none, he cracks open the door and looks around. The door opens to a parking garage and so he makes his way out and heads to the first row of cars. He looks inside each one until he finds one that he knows he can hotwire. Using his gun, he breaks a back window, reaches in and unlocks the door. Within a moment he has the car started and heads out of the garage in the opposite direction from where he was ambushed.

Loki arrives at the hospital immediately after Heimdall informed them about the attack on Director Fury. He teleports close to Steve’s room and see’s the Widow sneaking in and catches her eye. He watches as Natasha helps Steve dress and then ushers him out a side door. She leaves Steve in the hallway and runs back to the god. “We need to get out of here.”

“Understood.”

“No, Loki, you need to get out of here.”

Loki nods and moves ahead before she can say anything else, making sure their way is clear and then begins to search for the team he knows must be coming.

Loki drops the man he had been holding by the neck. He will not be recovering from his injuries. In fact, none of the men that the god encountered, trying to breach Steve’s room, will recover.

Fury ditches the car 6 blocks from his destination and makes his way on foot to the safe house. He is not surprised to see Natasha, but he is surprised and relieved to see Steve with her.
"What happened?" Steve asks.

“I picked him up as soon as you called,” Natasha explains before Fury can answer.

"The WSC is after Loki. They have been for a while."

"The Winter Soldier, he was after Loki," Steve states calmly despite his sudden fear.

"Right, but they didn’t send him directly after Loki, he's after you."

For the briefest of moments a look of anger flashes across Steve’s face.

Fury wipes his hand over his eyes with a sigh, "They know Loki will show up if Steve is in danger. Cap you’re considered an acceptable loss at this point."

Steve sits, staring at his hands, unsure how to respond. He is saved from having to when Natasha’s personal cell phone starts to play the song Iron Man. She looks at the device incredulously, “I didn’t program that in there,” she mutters and then puts it to her ear.

“What the hell is going on?” Tony yells. “Half of my building is destroyed!” He is exaggerating, but only slightly.

“What happened?"

“Loki and some guy with a metal arm just had it out.”

Natasha puts the phone on speaker and looks between Fury and Steve, making sure they are hearing Tony. “Where are they now?”

“Don’t know. Loki dropped a bus on the guy and disappeared. The guy walked away. Freakin’ got up and walked away.”

“Where are you now,” Steve asks so Tony can hear.

“Doing clean up. Loki left a trail of bodies. Probably should ask Fury what a SHIELD strike team was doing in my building.”

“SHIELD'S been compromised,” Fury responds.

“Compromised? SHIELD? As in the entire organization?”

“I don’t know how deep it goes, but as of right now we need to go on the assumption that SHIELD is a hostile force,” Fury instructs. “Just keep your head down for now Stark, they aren’t after you.”

“Will do. And if you see Loki, tell him he owes me about 2.3 Million dollars for repairs,” Tony quips before disconnecting the call.

“Are you sure they won’t go after Tony?” Steve asks.

“He can’t get them Loki so he should be fine.”

Steve looks relieved right up until Fury says, “there's something else. I need to tell you about project insight.”
“Are you sure you’re up for this?” Fury asks, looking at Steve.

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“All right then, you need to hit all three helicarriers at once.” He turns to Tony.

“Use these cards to replace the ones in the targeting system here,” the billionaire shows Steve. “I’ll take A. Who is going with you after B and C?” he asks looking to Natasha.

“I’ve got work to do on the inside making sure they can’t over ride the firing controls,” she responds.

“I’ve got B and C covered.”

“That leaves you exposed for a long time Cap, are you sure that’s a good idea? You’ve got an awful big target on your back right now,” Fury warns.

Steve nods, “I know.”

“Okay, lets go over the plan one more time. Agent Hill tells me the launch has been moved up to tomorrow morning. That will be your only chance to get on board.”
I am Machine

Three Days Grace

Here's to being human
All the pain and suffering
There's beauty in the bleeding
At least you feel something

I wish I knew what it was like
To care enough to carry on
I wish I knew what it was like
To find a place where I belong, but

I am machine
I never sleep
I keep my eyes wide open
I am machine
A part of me
Wishes I could just feel something
I am machine
I never sleep
Until I fix what's broken
I am machine
A part of me
Wishes I could just feel something

Here's to being human
Taking it for granted
The highs and lows of living
To getting second chances

I wish I knew what it was like
To care about what's right or wrong
I wish someone could help me find
Find a place where I belong, but

I am machine
I never sleep
I keep my eyes wide open
I am machine
A part of me
Wishes I could just feel something
I am machine
I never sleep
Until I fix what's broken
I am machine
A part of me
Wishes I could just feel something

It wasn't supposed to be this way
We were meant to feel the pain
I don't like what I am becoming
Wish I could just feel something

Day 188

It is hours before dawn when Natasha finds Steve sitting on the fire escape, feet dangling over the edge. “Can’t sleep?”

“Not really. You?”

She looks out over the street below, always scanning for danger, “I never sleep the night before an op.”

“I’ve been waiting for you to say I told you so,” he tells her looking down at his lap.

“About what?”

“Loki.”

There really isn’t a good response, so she stays quiet.

“The kicker is, I still love him. Even after….. everything.” He pauses looking out at the street. “But that’s over now.”

Natasha places her hand on his arm as she gets up. “Try to get some rest, we head out in a few hours.”

It is a simple matter for Natasha Romanov to infiltrate the Triskellion. Using a borrowed photostatic veil, she slips in with the other members of the World Security Council that have come to watch the launch in person. Programming the veil to mimic Councilwoman Hawley took only moments using the short video Natasha recorded prior to giving the woman a powerful sedative and leaving her with Fury.

Steve moves silently across the grounds of the Triskellion, working his way to the hidden hanger. He can feel the rumbling beneath his feet as the hanger doors begin to slowly glide open. When the door is almost completely open, he runs forward and drops down onto the helicarrier deck. He scrambles for cover and begins to work his way in towards the targeting system. He does not see the Winter Soldier drop onto the deck after him.
Natasha watches the 3 behemoth machines as they rise from beneath the lake. She holds a glass of champagne in her hand, ostensibly celebrating the launch of Project Insight.

“Targeting systems are coming on line,” Alexander Pierce announces. “Estimated time to target lock; 18 minutes.”

Natasha knows 18 minutes isn’t long enough for all three helicarriers to be disabled, not with Steve handling two of them himself. “You heard the man Cap.” Iron Man says when he hears this over their shared comm line.

“18 minutes, got it.”

“That’s gonna cut it pretty close for you. Are you sure you don’t want me to get C for you?”

“Just focus on A,” is Steve’s terse answer.

Tony swoops in from the side, narrowly avoiding the external guns as they track him across the sky. He flies close to the hull, working his way towards a back maintenance ledge in between the aft turbines.

“Sir, Iron Man has breached one of the helicarriers.”

Alexander Pierce is calm when he replies, “yes, I see it. I want him off that ship.” He turns to the rest of the council and raises his glass of champagne. “We are on the brink of a new world order. Hail Hydra!”

Natasha keeps her expression blank even as she hears the expletives in her earpiece from Tony. Steve is quiet, even though Natasha is sure he had to have heard Pierce.

Steve frowns when he hears Pierce, but doesn’t respond. Right now he has to stop the helicarriers from getting a target lock. Later, when this is over, he will have to deal with the fact that SHIELD has been infiltrated at the highest levels by Hydra and so he heads towards the targeting system. He moves quickly, pausing only when he is confronted by a crew member. He only has a moment to reflect on how few people try to stop him before something slams into his side, knocking him off his feet to crash into a wall.

He stands and slides his shield onto his arm, facing his assailant. The man pulls a gun and fires off a couple of rounds. Obviously meant to injure and not kill, Steve is able to use his shield to deflect the shots before he charges forward. He brings his shield up to block the metal fist aimed at his head and is able to land a blow to the man’s stomach, causing him to double over. He doesn’t get a long reprieve as the man straightens and launches himself back at the Captain in a flurry of kicks and punches.

Steve quickly realizes he cannot fight this man in such close quarters. Trading blows is not gaining him any advantage. His shield gets knocked from his hand and a vicious left hook lands him on his back, dazed and bleeding from a cut at his mouth. The Winter Soldier drops down to straddle him and punches him several more times before Steve can twist his wrist to activate the electro magnets in his glove to call the shield back to him. He brings it up, smashing it into the face of his attacker, pushing him back several feet and causing his mask and goggles to break away and in that instant,
Steve’s world comes crashing down.

“Bucky?” Steve gasps.

“Who the hell is Bucky?” the Winter Soldier asks just before he pulls a knife and charges back at Steve.

The blonde is able to dodge the blade but not the fist that impacts with his jaw. He uses his shield to push Bucky back several feet. “I won’t fight you, Bucky.”

He is momentarily distracted by the voice of Iron Man in his ear. “All done here Cap. How you lookin’?”

Steve looks at the targeting system and pulls the card out of his belt pouch. He turns his back on Bucky and runs to try and switch out the card. He has the panel open before the Winter Soldier is on him again. He slams Steve’s head into the rack causing the card to fall out of his hand. Reaching up, Steve is able to grab the old targeting card and pull it out of its slot before he hits the ground.

Bucky kicks him in the side and Steve can feel his ribs break. He pushes up to his knees and reaches for the fallen card. Just as his fingers close around it Bucky steps down on his hand, breaking his fingers. “Bucky, its me, Steve.”

The Winter Soldier doesn’t react to his friend, but he turns when a tall man with black hair, wearing leather and armor blasts him with a pulse of magic. His target, his mission. *Bring him in.*

“Steve!” Loki calls out.

“Don’t hurt him. It’s Bucky, don’t hurt him,” the blonde pleads.

Neither of them notice when the Winter Soldier pulls a second gun and aims it at the god. He fires several rounds, but Loki is able to get a magic barrier up in time. Frustrated, Bucky turns and fires off another round, hitting Steve in the gut. Loki lunges for Bucky, ramming his body into a steel support. He grabs the Winter Soldier by the hair and slams his head back into the beam.

“Loki!” Steve calls. “The targeting system. That needs to be put in the system,” Steve tells him, pointing towards the card on the floor.

“Can you stand?”

Steve grimaces as he pushes up to standing. The god lets Bucky fall to the ground then grabs the card, placing it in Steve’s hand as he moves back to the Winter Soldier who is slowly getting to his feet.

“Five minutes Cap,” Tony reminds him.

The blonde limps to the targeting system, one hand pressing against his stomach wound, the other clutching the card. He jerks around when he hears glass shattering, just in time to see the glass observation floor fall away, leaving only support beams between them and the ground below. The wind begins to swirl around them. Reaching for the targeting system he inserts the card into the slot. He looks back to see Bucky holding on to one of the support beams, his legs dangling over the open air.

Tony can see that the card has been activated on his heads up display. “B is a lock. Just need to get to C. Cap we’re out of time, I’m heading in.”

“Yeah,” she whispers, trying not to draw attention to herself.

“I need more time.”

Natasha moves towards the computer terminal connected to the large screen where the council is watching the launch. “How long before we have target lock?” she asks Pierce pleasantly.

He looks at the screen and frowns, “4 minutes.” Stepping closer, he pulls up the targeting program. “Something’s wrong.” He opens communication channel to all three helicarriers. “Start the targeting sequence now!”

“The carriers are not at optimum height sir,” one of the helicarrier commanders protests.

“Do it now!”

Natasha knows she has to stop Pierce and so she pulls the top button off her blouse and lunges forward, stabbing the concealed pin on the back into the neck of the other councilman present. The pin is coated in a toxin that will knock the councilman out for several hours. Moving quickly, she launches herself forward and presses her bracelet, which is a modified stinger, into Pierce’s neck. His body seizes and he hits the ground hard.

She deactivates the veil and then moves back to the computer terminal and tries to override the targeting system from there.

“You won’t make it. You can’t possibly break the encryption in time to stop it,” Pierce says from the floor.

Natasha barely glances at Pierce as she keeps working. “Cap, he’s right, we’re out of time.” Images and files begin to flicker across the monitor as her fingers move across the keyboard.

“What is she doing?” one of the councilmen watching remotely asks.

“I’m dumping all SHIELD’S and Hydra’s files on the internet,” she responds almost casually, hoping that even if they can’t stop the helicarriers, they can at least expose Hydra to the world.

“Are you ready for the world to know all your secrets Black Widow?” Pierce sneers from the ground.

“Are you?”

On the helicarrier Steve pulls the last targeting card from his pouch. “Loki you need to take this and get to the last helicarrier!”

Loki follows Steve’s gaze and watches as the Winter Soldier is pulling himself up on the beam. The god moves towards Bucky again, intent on stopping the man, but stops when Steve yells, “Loki stop! Get this to the other helicarrier! We have to stop them from getting a target lock.”

The god is torn. He needs to protect Steve, but he also knows the Captain will not forgive him if he does not disable the last helicarrier. He moves back to Steve and takes the card, “Be careful, don’t try to fight him,” he whispers before disappearing.

“I won’t,” Steve responds truthfully.
It is only a matter of moments before Tony announces, “targeting system override program initiated. Cap I don’t know how you did it. You’ve got about 5 minutes to get out.”

When Loki reappears moments later, Bucky has Steve pinned down with his back on one of the steel beams. His shield hangs loose in his hand. He see’s Bucky pull his fist back and hit Steve again. The blonde makes no move to block the blow.

“I won’t fight you. You’re my friend,” he says around a mouth full of blood.

“I have to complete my mission!” the Winter Soldier shouts as he pulls his metal fist back again.

Steve knows what is coming and releases his grip on the shield, letting it fall to the ground below.

“Then finish it, because I’m with you until the end of the line.”

Steve’s head jerks to the side with the force of the blow, but he says nothing, does nothing. Loki appears behind Bucky and grabs him by the shoulder, throwing him back. He bends and caresses Steve’s cheek before he turns on Bucky. He lifts the man by his neck squeezing as he does. Bucky brings his metal arm down again and again on Loki’s arm trying to dislodge it before he blacks out.

“Cap! Steve! Are you out? You’ve got less than 2 minutes!” Tony yells into his com. “Natasha do you have eyes on Steve?”

“Tapping into the helicarrier security feeds. I don’t see….. wait. I’ve got him. Stark he’s down. Can you get him out?”

“Show me where he is.” She sends him the feed from the helicarrier and Tony angles his thrusters and flies towards the Captain.

“He’s not alone on there. The Winter Soldier is there. And Loki.”

“They can find their own ride,” Tony quips as he watches the timer tick down on his screen. Even before he see’s all the gun ports start to realign, he already knows he is going to be too late.

The first series of shots jolt the helicarrier, causing Loki to drop Bucky.

The second volley knocks him to his knees. He checks on Steve and can see that the Captain is perilously close to falling. Loki jerks to his feet and stumbles towards his former lover as the barrage intensifies. The helicarrier starts to list and the god can feel as is begins to lose altitude.

Loki moves towards Steve, uses his magic to keep his balance on the metal beam and grabs the Captain under his arms, lifting him. He feels the impact of a bullet in his back and loses his grip on Steve. Loki’s heart lurches as the blonde hits the beam. Bucky charges Loki from behind and knocks him into Steve’s body. The impact pushes him off the beam and Loki watches him fall towards the water below. The god roars in anger. Turning towards Bucky, he gathers his magic to destroy the Winter Soldier, but stops short when he see’s the man staring at the water below looking completely lost. He cannot kill this man. Steve wouldn’t want this. He reminds himself. But he will not take the time to save him. Loki scans the water until he spots a familiar splash of red, white and blue. He wastes no time diving in to the water below.
He surfaces near Steve and pulls his body close then teleports them to the edge of the lake. The Captain sputters and coughs out some water to Loki’s relief.

“Your shield?”

The blonde gestures to the water, but says nothing.

Loki looks back to the water and vanishes again. It takes him a few minutes to find the shield and retrieve it. He surfaces as 2 of the helicarriers above crash into each other and the third begins to break apart, crashing to the ground in large sections. Loki looks back to Steve on the shore and curses when he see’s the Winter Soldier kneeling beside him.

Bucky leans in and then pulls a knife from his belt. Before he can bring it down, Loki is on him. He throws Bucky into a tree and then stalks towards him. Steve struggles to his feet, “Loki no! Please, he’s my friend. Don’t do this.”

Bucky looks at the Captain, brows furrowed, “Steve?”

The god turns his back to Steve before grabbing Bucky and vanishing.
Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

Another shorter chapter. I will try to post another one in a day or so. Also, shameless use of a Star Wars (Return of the Jedi) quote ahead, somewhat altered to fit.

Chapter 38

Broken As Me
Papa Roach

You're just as broken as me
Shut your mouth cause I can see through the lies
We're only getting sicker from the secrets we hide
Disaster is our master as we lie here burning in bed
But something tells me I can not give up on you yet
I will not give up on you today
I will forgive and forget cause I know that it will set me free
But all that's left is the emptiness inside of me
You murdered heart broke my trust and watched me fade away
Now I see, now I see
That you're just as broken as me
You're just as broken as me
You always play the victim and you just can't decide
If the vicious way we loved each other fucked up our lives
When we're standing in the aftermath our emptiness is what's left
And if you really loved me, will you love me till death?
I will love you until the end
I will forgive and forget cause I know that it will set me free
But all that's left is the emptiness inside of me
You murdered heart broke my trust and watched me fade away
Now I see, now I see
That you're just as broken as me
I've been a slave
You've been a slave
I've been a slave to the hatred in you – in me
I see you're just as broken as me

Day 189

Loki watches the dark haired man sleeping. Several times he has moved to end this and kill the man, but each time his hand is stayed by the thought of what Steve would think of him. Instead he focuses on healing the bullet wound in his back. Extracting the bullet with his magic took a lot of focus, but
now with it removed, his body can begin healing the muscle and skin.

Day 190

Steve wakes in a hospital bed tucked away in the basement of Stark Tower. Natasha is sitting next to him, watching the news with the sound turned low. Every channel is covering the revelations revealed when she dumped SHIELD’S files. The level of Hydra’s infiltration surprises even her as several high ranking politicians are arrested. Her own files were also released and so all her covers are blown. She will have to make some decisions soon, but first, she needs to make sure Steve will be alright.

The man known as the Winter Soldier comes back to awareness and immediately is on alert. He knows not to give anything away and so he doesn’t open his eyes and forces his body not to react. He focuses on keeping his breathing steady as he minutely flexes his muscles trying to figure out if he is restrained. It doesn’t take long to figure out that he is, but he cannot determine what is being used.

“You can stop, James Buchanan Barnes. My magic will keep you effectively bound until I decide otherwise.”

The soldier opens his eyes and takes in the man before him. His target, his mission; bring this man in.

“You know who I am?” the man asks.

The soldier doesn’t respond. “No matter. It would seem your masters are no longer holding your tether. So the question now is what to do with you.”

Loki begins to pace around the room, “the only reason you are not already dead is because of Steve Rogers.” The god turns back to the man, who stares back at him, eyes wild. “Steve thought you dead, mourned you and yet here you are. What could have happened to you that would turn you against your closest friend?” the god muses to himself.

The soldier stays silent, but his eyes widen as Loki grabs him by the head and delves into his mind.

Day 191

Loki sits at the small table watching the soldier sleep. The god is troubled by what he found in his mind. He was able to remove the compulsion to complete his mission, but did not want to do much more without the man’s explicit consent. However, it was hard to keep himself from looking for memories of Steve.

Bucky wakes up with the sun streaming through a window and in his face. He squints his eyes trying to get his bearings. There is a table across the room and sitting at it is the same dark haired man as before. Bucky remembers that his name is Loki. He remembers fighting him. He remembers……

He sits up and stretches his neck, keeping an eye on Loki. The god gets up and walks to the kitchen,
where he pours a cup of coffee. He takes it and sits on the edge of the bed before handing the cup to Bucky. “Steve seems to think coffee is one of man’s great inventions. I cannot abide it, but he likes it, hence the……” he trails off, gesturing to the coffee maker sitting on the kitchen counter.

“Where are we?” Bucky finally asks.

“Colorado.”

“Colorado?” he repeats incredulously. There is no further response or explanation from the god. “Where is……… Steve?

“With his team mates. In New York.”

Bucky looks down in confusion for a moment, “I know him.”

“He is your best friend.”

Bucky gets up and begins to walk around the room, eventually ending up in the kitchen. He stands and stares at a crack in the counter top and pauses to trace his fingers over it. “He was part of my mission.”

“And what was your mission, Bucky?” Loki tests.

“You were my mission, bring you in, by any means.”

“Including hurting Steve,” the god concludes.

“I know him.” Bucky repeats, sounding tentative and unsure.

By now Loki knows that Bucky’s mind has been toyed with. The gaps he discovered in his memory and closed off sections of the soldiers mind were a clear indicator that something had been done to the man during his missing years. “It would seem we have more than Steve Rogers in common. I believe, if you wish it, I could help you. Purge them from your brain.”

There is no hesitation, “do it.”

Natasha frowns at Steve as he pulls a shirt over his head. “You need to stay here at least a few more days Steve. You haven’t healed and its still a shit storm out there in the media.”

He glares at her and then softens his expression. “I have to find him Tasha. I can’t fail him again.”

“I know. And we will, but we don’t even know where to start looking. We have to think about this rationally.”

“And just leave him out there? With Loki?” The Captain ties his shoes and straightens. His attention is briefly caught by the images on the TV. “I wonder if this was Loki’s plan all along. To get to Bucky.”

“He couldn’t have known that Bucky was still alive.”

“Maybe not,” he concedes, “but he took him. He knows how important Bucky is to me and he took him.”
Day 192

Lightning flashes outside the window, followed closely by the rumble of thunder. Bucky jerks awake and scans the room for danger. “Loki?” he calls out when he see’s the god standing by the window.

He doesn’t turn, “go back to sleep Bucky. Its just a storm.”

“Then why aren’t you sleeping?”

Loki only hums in response, still watching the storm outside the window.

The soldier moves to stand beside him. “How long do you think it will take to get it all back?” he asks.

There is no need to ask what Bucky means. Loki has been working to unlock the suppressed portions of the soldier’s mind. It is an exhausting and painstaking process trying to undo the damage Hydra caused. “I regret that there is little more that I can do. I fear what has been done is beyond my abilities.”

Bucky tries to hide his disappointment. There is still so much that he doesn’t remember. So much he doesn’t know. “Hey, its ok. You’ve given me back so much already,” he tries to reassure. “Why don’t you get some sleep. I don’t think I’ll be able to with this storm anyway.”

Loki watches in horror as the glass shatters below Steve and he falls to the water below. The helicarrier shifts and Loki falls. He hits the water hard and comes up sputtering.

He sees Bucky about 15 feet away, he does not appear to be conscious. Loki swims to him and wraps his arm around his chest then teleports them to the shore of the lake. Bucky isn’t breathing and so Loki sits next to him trying to push on his chest to bring him around.

He pulls Bucky’s body up into his arms with a sob. “Please……”

“He’s dead Loki. You killed him,” comes Steve’s voice from behind him. “Just like you killed me.”

Day 193

“How did you meet Steve?”

“We first met in Germany about 6 months ago,” Loki responds. “He hit me with his shield,” he adds with a chuckle.

When he doesn’t continue Bucky prompts, “are you…….friends?”

Bucky doesn’t miss the fleeting sadness that crosses the gods features. “Are you more than friends?” Even though Steve never told him outright about his attraction to men, Bucky always knew and this guy, he is just Steve’s type.

Unwilling to talk about his relationship with Steve, Loki changes the subject. “I understand that you were very close.”

“About as close as two guys can be.” He pauses for a moment, “its weird. I can remember my
mom’s name, the street I grew up on, the first time I ever pulled Steve out of a fight, but I don’t know who the president is, what my favorite color is, or where I went to school. I know there are things missing. Gaps that need to be filled, but Steve, I remember him.”

Loki thinks back to the image he pulled from Steve’s mind so long ago. The image of Bucky on his knees. “You love him, don’t you?” he asks.

“Yes.”

“All right. I understand. When I take you back, I won’t get in the way.”

“Oh, its not like that at all! He’s like my brother.”
Chapter 39

Monster

Starset

Under the knife I surrendered
The innocence yours to consume
You cut it away
And you filled me up with hate
Into the silence you sent me
Into the fire consumed
You thought I'd forget
But it's always in my head
You're the pulse in my veins
You're the war that I wage
Can you change me?
Can you change me?
You're the love that I hate
You're the drug that I take
Will you cage me?
Will you cage me?
You're the pulse in my veins
You're the war that I wage
Can you change me?
Can you change me?
From the monster you made me?
The monster you made me?
This is the world you've created
The product of what I've become
My soul and my youth
Seems it's all for you to use
If I could take back the moment
I let you get under my skin
Relent or resist?
Seems the monster always wins
My heart's an artifice, a decoy soul
I'll lift you up and then I'll let you go
I've made an art of digging shallow holes
I drop the darkness in and watch it grow
My heart's an artifice, a decoy soul
Who knew the emptiness could be so cold?
I've lost the parts of me that make me whole
I am the darkness
I'm a monster
You're the pulse in my veins
You're the war that I wage
Can you change me?
Can you change me?
From the monster you made me?
The monster you made me?

Day 194

It has been 72 days since Steve last stepped foot in his apartment in Brooklyn. After the chaos of the last few days, he just wanted to go home. To his home. He expected…. He’s not sure what he expected, but it isn’t this. Squatters? He wonders to himself.

The bed is unmade, there are toiletries on the bathroom counter that do not belong to him and there is food in the cupboards that he certainly did not buy. That combined with the fact that the apartment doesn’t feel like it has been closed up for over two months, and he is certain that someone has been staying there.

He gathers the bedding and puts it in the wash and then goes in to the bathroom to gather up the items that don’t belong to him. It is only now that he notices the clothes in the laundry hamper. He reaches down to pull out the shirt on top and his stomach lurches. It’s not his, but he recognizes the t-shirt all the same. He drops it back in the hamper and walks out of the bathroom to check the closet. In it he finds several pairs of pants that are not his size, quite a few shirts that are not his style and an all too familiar long, black and green leather coat. “Son of a bitch.”

Day 195

“This is where Steve lives?” Bucky asks as he eyes the building doubtfully.

“He is staying here. He lives in Brooklyn,” Loki responds.

The corners of Bucky’s mouth turn up ever so slightly at the mention of Brooklyn and the memories that flash through his head. The smile fades just as quickly though. “This is a safe house,” he concludes.

Loki leads the soldier to the door without answering. “I don’t know if he is here, but I trust you can get inside easily enough,” he says as he steps back.

“Wait! You aren’t leaving are you?”

“I have no reason to stay."

“Of course you do! What if I try to hurt him? What if my programming comes back? You can’t just leave me. You’re the only one that can stop me!” Bucky pleads.

“You will be fine-“

“No!” Bucky cuts him off. “Steve is the only other person I know and I tried to kill him. What if something happens?”

The god frowns at Bucky, “wait here.” He vanishes and then returns minutes later, just as the soldier
is getting ready to panic.

Loki hands him a package with a prepaid phone and a slip of paper with a number on it. “Take care Bucky,” he says as he disappears again.

Bucky stands staring at the spot where the god had been just moments before. He knows what he needs to do and so he turns and knocks on the door. When Steve doesn’t answer, he pulls a pin out from his pocket and uses it to pick the lock and go inside.

“We….” Loki breathes when he see’s the blonde standing in the kitchen of his Brooklyn apartment.

The Captain’s reaction is instantaneous. He is on Loki, fist twisted in the gods shirt. “Where is he? What did you do to him?”

“Your Bucky is safe.”

“Where?!?” Steve demands as he pulls his fist back, ready to strike his former lover. The god can see the rage in the Captains eyes and on his face and knows only one thing will quell his anger and so he disappears.

He re appears in the living room of the safe house, startling Bucky. “Lets go,” he says as he grabs the soldier by the arm.

Bucky resists, pulling away from the gods grip. “Wait.” He grabs the cell phone and number off the counter, “ok,” he says offering his arm back.

Steve is pacing the small apartment, running his hands through his short hair, when Loki and Bucky appear. He looks at his best friend and then pulls him into a tight hug. “Thank god. Bucky. Thank god. I thought you were dead,” he cries.

“Hey c’mon. C’mon Steve, Stevie.” Bucky pats his friends back soothingly, “you gotta ease up there Stevie.”

Steve finally releases him and steps back, blushing slightly. “Where’s Loki?” he asks as soon as he realizes the god is gone. Bucky looks at the phone still clutched in his hand and swallows, then shrugs his shoulders.

Day 196

Loki looks at his phone when it buzzes on the table beside him.

*It’s Bucky. Can we meet?*

He frowns as he taps out a reply.

*Not wise to be around steve right now-L*
The response is swift.

I need your help.

Where is steve?-L

Grocery store

The god heaves a dramatic sigh and teleports to Steve’s apartment. “What part of not wise to be around Steve right now do you not understand?” he hisses.

“Look, he’s driving me crazy. It hasn’t even been a full day. He’s hovering like a mother hen. I had to pretend I was going to take a nap just to get him out of the house for a little bit.”

“He is just concerned. That’s all.”

“No, I know. I get that. But I caught myself watching his posture, looking for the best way to take him down, looking for a weakness, something to use against him.”

Loki sits on the edge of the bed. “Can you look again?” Bucky asks.

“I told you, there is little more I can do to help you.”

“You said little more, not nothing more,” he challenges. “What if I hurt him?”

Loki really doesn’t want to do this. To try again means delving even deeper into Bucky’s already fragile mind, but the soldier is desperate and so he relents.

“Sit here,” the god instructs as he pats the bed beside him. “This may be unpleasant, but I will try to lesson it as much as I can. There, uh, may be some bleed back. I would advise you not to dwell on any thoughts that are not your own.” Loki can only hope that whatever he unlocks in the soldiers mind doesn’t make matters worse.

“Get your hands off of him!” Steve yells from the doorway, grocery bag now on the floor where he dropped it.

Loki immediately jerks back. “I’m sorry,” he whispers and then is gone.

“What the hell was he doing?” the blonde shouts.

“He was trying to help me.”

“He is not to be trusted Bucky,” Steve replies calmer this time.

“He’s been helping me Steve. My head, it’s a mess and I won’t know how bad until its too late.” Part of Bucky is relieved. Relieved that Steve arrived when he did, that he stopped Loki from pulling out anymore memories. Knowing even some of what was done to break him, makes him angry and he can’t look at his best friend for fear the man will see it on his face. He can plan though. He can destroy every last one of them for what they did to him, for what they took from him. What he cannot do is push back the other memories, the ones that are not his own, the bleed back, as Loki said.
Loki curls into himself on the bed in Colorado. He knows he pushed too hard. He knows he wasn’t able to keep everything separated and that it is likely Bucky got some of his memories and thoughts. He just doesn’t know which ones.
Chapter 40

Chapter 40

Misfits
Shine Down

Staring back in time
The two of us intertwined
And your black boots
Walking fast next to mine

We were chasing the thunder inside the storm
Running so wild outside the norm
And what we made
The two of us against the grain

Come out, come out, wherever you are
I know you're there, I know you are

They called us crazy 'cause we never fit in
We never thought of keeping up with their trends
It didn't matter that we weren't on the list
'Cause we were misfits, we were misfits

Staying up all night
Drinking more than we should
Getting way too high
When the sun came through
I watched you laugh
I saw you cry

'Cause the world has a way of tearing you down
Keeps you tied to the circus
Paints you up like a clown
But I'm right here
Day after day, year after year

So come out, come out, wherever you are
I know you're there, I know you are

They called us crazy 'cause we never fit in
We never thought of keeping up with their trends
It didn't matter that we weren't on the list
'Cause we were misfits, we were misfits

And after all we never played by the rules
We broke the mould and found our own kind of cool
It didn't matter that we weren't on the list
'Cause we were misfits, we were misfits

Don't wait up
We're long gone

Day 197

Bucky stares at his phone trying to work up the nerve to send the text message he typed out. Steve is in the shower and so now is the best time, when the blonde won’t see him and ask questions. He erases the message and instead taps out a shorter one.

*Hey are you ok*

There is no immediate reply and Bucky can hear the water turn off in the bathroom.

*I'm gonna go after them. Burn them to the ground*

There is still no response from the god. By the sounds coming from the bathroom, Bucky knows Steve will be out soon.

*I'll need your help.*

Finally a response.

*Steve can help you-L*

*Not with everything. Steve is meeting with someone named Natasha tomorrow. Lets talk.*

He puts the phone in his pocket just as Steve emerges from the bathroom.

Day 198

Loki knocks lightly on the door of Steve’s Brooklyn apartment after he watched the blonde leave. The soldier opens the door and ushers the god inside.

“Bucky,” he greets as he sits on the edge of the bed. He idly looks around and wonders where Bucky is sleeping since there is only one bed in the small apartment.

The soldier follows Loki’s gaze around the room. “On the couch,” he says.

Loki just looks at him.

“You were wondering where I sleep. Steve tried to offer me the bed, but I said no. And I sure as hell ain’t sharing a bed with him. I’ll leave that to you,” he grins.

“Bleed back?” Loki asks with a sigh as he rubs his temples.

“Some of you two, but I could tell when we talked before. You said you wouldn’t get in the way of me and him. Odd thing to say, if there wasn’t something going on. So what happened, with you two, I mean.” Bucky doesn’t mention the other things he saw. The things that make his stomach twist and his gorge rise when his thoughts dwell too long.
Loki glares at Bucky and changes the subject. “You want to go after hydra?”

Bucky knows not to pursue the topic any longer, at least for now, so he answers the gods question. “I do. The world needs to be rid of their filth.”

“Do you have a target in mind?”

Glancing at the door, the soldier smiles grimly, “not yet, but Steve said this Natasha pulled some information from Camp Lehigh and so they were going to go over it all.”

Loki nods, “that’s good. The three of you should be able to handle Hydra.”

“No. You know I need your help.”

“And I told you that you have Steve to help you.”

“Steve doesn’t have it in him to do what needs to be done. He’s too……Steve.” The corner of the gods mouth quirks up. He knows exactly what Bucky means by that. “But you and I? We’re a lot alike. What we’ve been through. And you know it.”

Loki considers the other man’s words. “And what will Steve think when we do this? Do you really think he will just hand over any information he has and let us go on our way?”

“No, I don’t think that at all, Loki. I’m not a complete idiot,” Bucky replies with a grin.

“No, I suppose not. Figure out your first target.”

Loki stands to leave, but before he can, Bucky has one last question, “how do you decide when to teleport and when to just use the door?”

The god barks out a laugh, “its all about the drama Bucky Barnes,” he says just before vanishing.

Day 199

Bucky and Steve sit on the couch looking over images of several suspected Hydra bases. Steve flips through the printed pages with the limited information they have on each one.

Bucky picks up one of the images, “I think we should start here.”

Steve frowns. He knows Bucky wants to go after Hydra and part of him thinks it would be good for him to do it, but the other part of him is worried for his friend. He only just got him back.

“Steve, I’m going. I would prefer if you went with me, but I am going. With or without you.”

Day 200

The Other approaches Thanos as he sits upon his throne. Ronan follows close behind and stops in front of the titan.

“The Orb,” Thanos says simply. The other turns to Ronan and holds out his clawed hand for it.

“And what of your promise? To destroy Xandar?” The Kree asks before handing it over.
“Xandar will be destroyed.” Thanos looks to The Other before continuing. “Along with the Kree.” The Other pulls a long serrated blade from his waist and drives it deep into Ronan’s chest. The Kree’s eyes open wide as blood begins to run from his mouth. He is dead within moments and The Other stoops to pluck the Orb from his still warm hand.

“Find the time stone,” Thanos commands.

Day 201

Are you sure you won’t come with us? We leave in the morning.

Loki looks at his phone when it buzzes. He feels conflicted. He wants to be there to support Bucky, whom he feels rather fond of and also to keep an eye on Steve, but he knows Steve doesn’t want him around and he can’t stop seeing the image of Steve with that other man in his mind.

You know why I can’t go with you. -L

There is a long pause before Bucky responds.

Yeah I know.

Good luck Bucky. Keep an eye on Steve-L

Day 202

We’re back. It was a bust. Nothing there.

Loki looks at his phone as a feeling of intense relief washes over him. He hadn’t realized just how worried he was until just this moment. Maybe he should go with them on the next raid.

Day 203

Bucky quietly lets himself back into the apartment, hoping Steve hasn’t woken and noticed he was gone, but he isn’t that lucky. He ducks his head at the disapproving look his friend is giving him. He walks to the kitchen and gets himself a glass of water, waiting for the questions he knows are coming. It doesn’t take long.

“Where were you? I was worried something had happened.”

Without turning around Bucky answers, “I went out. No big deal.”

“Its not safe Bucky.”

Steve flinches when the glass shatters in Bucky’s hand and he whirls around, “not safe for who Steve? For me? Or for everyone else.”

The blonde takes a calming breath, “I just worry. I could go with you, so you wouldn’t be alone out there.”

“I wasn’t alone! Did it ever occur to you that I need to spend some time away from you? God Steve,
you’re so worried about what could happen, what might go wrong. You’re smothering me.”

“Wait, what you do mean you weren’t alone? Who were you with?”

Bucky chuckles humorlessly at that, “of course you would focus on that.”

“I’m scared Bucky. I just got you back. I’m sorry if you feel I’ve been smothering you. Can you at least tell me who you were with? I’d feel better if I could check them out and make sure they aren’t out to hurt you.” Steve is on his feet now standing in front of his friend. Bucky kneels down to pick up the broken glass and to avoid looking at Steve.

“It’s Loki.”

“What?” Steve’s mind is reeling. Why would Bucky be spending time with Loki? What is the god playing at?

Bucky moves to throw away the glass and then faces his friend. “He understands me Steve. In a way that you can’t and shouldn’t. You and I, we have all this history together and there’s all these expectations. It’s not like that with Loki.”

“Stop. please stop,” the blonde pleads. “Just…,” a terrible thought occurs to him, “…..are you sleeping with him?”

“Oh my god! That’s where your mind goes? Seriously Steve!” Bucky shoulders past his friend and sits on the couch staring at the blank TV screen.

“I need to get some air, I’ll be back,” Steve tells him as he grabs his jacket and walks out the door.

Loki’s phone buzzes.

_Steve knows we’ve been talking._

_Oh?-L_

_Yeah. Not good_
Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

Bucky Barnes has a new BFF.

Chapter 41

Blister
Red Sun Rising

Eyesores and catacombs
Injustice is a place on the globe
So point your finger
And give it a spin now
’Cause there’s no end to this wicked world
As long as there’s blood on our hands
Faith is where profits lay
Symbols brand and segregate
A silver consequence drapes from our necks now
Lonely souls rely on holy goals
With no relevance and no evidence
Nothing to preach about
And there’s no end to this wicked world
As long as there’s blood on my hands
And there’s blood on my hands
And there’s no end to this wicked world
As long as there’s blood on my hands
And there’s blood on my hands
And there’s no end to this wicked world
As long as there’s blood on my hands
And there’s blood on my hands

Day 204

Bucky lays on the couch staring at the ceiling, arms crossed on his chest. He taps his foot restlessly against the end of the couch. “I think we should take Loki with us this time.”

Steve tries to keep the disapproval out of his voice, but its hard. “We can handle it on our own.”

Bucky gets up from the couch and grabs his jacket. He walks out the door and Steve lets him go.

Day 205

The two men sit on the patio in front of a coffee shop. Loki holds his cup of tea in both his hands.
Bucky has a half empty cup of coffee in front of him. “How do you live with it? All the deaths.“

With a sigh, Loki sets his cup down, “I am over 1000 years old. Asgard is a warrior culture and I was on the battlefield from a young age. In my time I have seen much death and destruction. The ones I cannot forget? Are those that were not given the chance to fight. When I first arrived, here on Midgard, I destroyed an entire SHIELD facility. Many people died that day because of me. People that kissed their loved ones goodbye that morning, fully expecting to go home that night. I killed them. I cannot fix what I have done. And even though I know I was under another’s control, as were you, it does little to assuage my guilt.”

Bucky swallows and nods his head, “I remember. Every one of them. Every last one. There are so many faces. So many names. And I can see myself pulling the trigger or holding the knife. I can see my hands wrapped around a neck as I watch the light fade from their eyes. I didn’t enjoy it, but I certainly didn’t hate it. At least not then.”

Neither man says anything for a time. When Bucky’s coffee is gone and his own tea has cooled, Loki looks up, “You are more than your past Bucky Barnes, more than what was done to you.”

The soldier huffs out a small laugh, “and what makes you so sure about that?”

“I have to be. I have to believe that you can be more than what you were, more than what you are now. If I am to have any hope for myself, I have to believe it will happen.”

Bucky just hums before he answers, “and where does Steve fit in all this?”

Loki smiles softly, “ahhh, that is easy. He is the light that shines on our darkness.”

“You ever gonna tell me what happened between you two?”

Loki smiles again, “what would you like to know? I am feeling magnanimous today.”

Day 206

Bucky is looking over the file Steve handed him earlier that morning. Having decided on their next target, Bucky reads over the plan Steve came up with for infiltrating the base. He can’t help but notice that his plan only calls for a two person team, meaning Steve is still against Loki helping them.

Day 207

“Natasha,” Steve greets as soon as she answers her phone.”

“What’s up?”

“I need a plane;” he responds.

“And…."

“Bucky and I are going after a base in Siberia.”

Natasha frowns, but keeps her displeasure out of her voice., “I’ll talk to Stark.”
Day 208

Bucky opens the door to find a petite red head standing outside. He leans against the door frame and gives his most charming smile as he crosses his arms over his chest.

Steve leans back on the couch to see who is at the door. He grins when he see’s the bored look on Natasha’s face. He is still grinning at her as she strolls past Bucky and flops down next to him. “I’ve got your plane, fueled and ready.”

“Thanks Nat,” Steve tells her.

“Don’t thank me yet. Stark only let me take it on two conditions.” Steve frowns before she continues. “I have to go with you and I have to turn over any tech for him to look over.”

Bucky climbs over the back of the arm chair and sits on the top of it. “Doesn’t trust you much does he Stevie.”

Turning her head slowly, Natasha looks at Bucky as she speaks. “He trusts enough to allow us to take his plane.” She turns back to Steve, “you know why I have to go with you.”

The blonde nods at her before looking away, “I do.”

Bucky looks between the two of them, “great! Now that that’s settled lets get moving.”

Day 209

Bucky texts Loki to tell him about their next raid. He briefly tells him the plan.

\textit{sounds solid. Steve is a great strategist. –L}

\textit{Natasha is going with us. Stark wouldn’t let steve take a plane without her along to babysit.}

\textit{Don’t be too broken up about it she is quite formidable for such a small thing. -L}

\textit{You almost sound like you like her.}

\textit{She is tolerable. She has been good to steve.-L}

Day 210

Right from the start this mission is different from the last. This base is not abandoned and there are soldiers. The three of them split off with Natasha working her way through the labs on the basement level looking for more information they can analyze. Steve and Bucky work to clear out the ground level and any soldiers they encounter, destroying machinery as they go.

“I’m all done down here,” Natasha tells them through the comm. “You boys just about done?”

Steve answers first, “just about. Bucky?”

“On my last room. There’s a cryo pod in here. Its empty.”

“Do you need help with it?” Steve asks, knowing it will need to be destroyed.
“No I got it,” he grunts out as he pushes on the base of a floor mounted crane, trying to topple it over onto the pod. When that doesn’t work he pulls his gun and tries to shoot out one of the bolts securing it to the ground. That doesn’t work either. Bucky is determined to drop that crane now and so he pulls a small detonator out of the pack on his back. He sets it at the base with a 15 second timer and backs away.

“Jesus,” he mutters to himself when he see’s the crane still standing, despite the way it is leaning. Deciding this is taking too much time, he moves back to the pod and pulls out another small detonator, he sets another 15 second timer and moves away again. “Should’ve just done that in the first place,” he chides himself as the detonator goes off. Walking over to make sure the pod is destroyed, he has just enough time to dive out of the way as the crane finally crashes down. Only, he doesn’t come away unscathed, as his metal arm is trapped beneath the arm of the crane. He tries to pull himself out, but cannot get enough leverage to push the chunk of metal off.

“Hey, uh, Steve? I think I need a little help here,” he says into the comm trying to sound casual so he doesn’t panic his friend.

Steve sucks in a breath when he hears Bucky. He knows something is wrong just by the tone of the other man’s voice and so he sets off at a run to the other end of the building where he knows Bucky was last.

Steve and Natasha both arrive in the room within seconds of each other. The red head surveys the damage, “nice work Barnes, but next time you may want to work out a better exit strategy.”

Bucky rolls his eyes in response. Steve steps forward and tries to lift the crane off of his friends arm. He can get it to shift, but it is too heavy even for him.

“My phone’s in my pocket. Call Loki.”

Steve frowns and looks away before trying to lift the crane again. “Now is not the time to go all stubborn on me Rogers,” Bucky tells him.

“We don’t need him,” the blonde growls.

“Then what do you suggest?” Natasha asks. When Steve doesn’t answer, she gets the phone out of Bucky’s pocket and calls Loki herself. The god answers and appears almost immediately. He quickly looks over the situation and then uses his magic to lift the crane arm off Bucky who rolls out of the way as soon as he is free.

Steve walks up to Loki and mutters a quick thank you just before the god disappears.

The flight home is quiet as Steve retreats to the back of the plane, lost in thought. Bucky leaves him alone and joins Natasha in the cockpit. “I called ahead to Tony and let him know we will be coming in. He’ll take a look at the damage to your arm and get it fixed up for you.”

Day 211

Bucky sits at the work station while Tony pokes at his arm. “The damage isn’t too bad. Should be able to have you out of here in a couple of hours.”

He looks to Steve and then back to Tony, “great, thanks. I, uh, don’t have a way to pay you.”
The billionaire smiles, “oh don’t worry about that. You’re gonna let me take a bunch of scans and readings, as many as I want in fact. Isn’t he Steve?” He asks, turning to the blonde.

“Yeah, sure. I guess that’s fine. Buck?”

Bucky suppresses a sigh, “go for it.”

Once Tony has the scans started, Steve pulls him out of the room. “I want Bucky to be an Avenger,” he tells him.

The excitement Tony was feeling at being able to examine the tech in Bucky’s mechanical arm fades, but he keeps his expression blank. “Schedule a meeting and we’ll discuss it with the team. Natasha will have to get a hold of Clint. He’s on an extended vacation.”

Steve smiles brightly, “I’ll call her and get something set up. I really think Bucky will be a great addition.”

Day 212

“Natasha,” Steve greets when he opens the door.

“Steve,” she returns, stepping past him into the apartment.

“I wasn’t expecting you. Is everything all right?”

“Yeah, I was looking over the data from Siberia.” She pulls a file out of her jacket and sits down next to Bucky on the couch. “I identified a couple more bases we can go after.” She opens the file and pulls out some aerial photos and hands them to Steve who takes them and sits in the arm chair. While Steve is looking over the photos, Natasha palms a thumb drive and passes it to Bucky. He doesn’t acknowledge it, but quickly sticks it in his pocket.

When Steve goes out for groceries Bucky pulls out the laptop and plugs in the thumb drive. There are several files on the drive. Some photos, some video, some text. There is one that says read first and so he does.

It is a brief message from Natasha.

I recovered files from your conditioning into the Winter Soldier program. There are details as to how it was done. I didn’t think you would want Steve to see this. According to the reports, there may be more subjects in cryo at the Kiev base. If there are any other soldiers in cryo, they will need to be destroyed. You and I both know Steve doesn’t have what it takes to do it. I need to do a little more leg work on this one, but we’ll need to hit them soon. And bring Loki.

His hand shakes as he loads the first set of images and begins to scan through them. After working with Loki he knew about some of this, some of the torture, the methods they used to break him down. It is only when he moves to the videos and reports that he realizes just how bad it was, how depraved they were. He erases the images and the videos, leaving only the report and then he texts Loki.
Chapter 42

Chapter Summary

Bucky Barnes: voice of reason
And there are those pesky pictures again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 42

I Miss You
blink-182

Hello there, the angel from my nightmare
The shadow in the background of the morgue
The unsuspecting victim of darkness in the valley
We can live like Jack and Sally if we want
Where you can always find me
We'll have Halloween on Christmas
And in the night we'll wish this never ends
We'll wish this never ends
Where are you and I'm so sorry
I cannot sleep I cannot dream tonight
I need somebody and always
This sick strange darkness
Comes creeping on so haunting every time
And as I stared I counted
Webs from all the spiders
Catching things and eating their insides
Like indecision to call you
and hear your voice of treason
Will you come home and stop this pain tonight
Stop this pain tonight
Don't waste your time on me you're already
The voice inside my head (I miss you, I miss you)

Day 213

Loki and Bucky are sitting in the cabin in Colorado. Bucky opens the lap top and loads the report
Natasha gave him. He hands the lap top to Loki and nods at the god. Loki settles back on the couch
and begins to read the report. Bucky tries to avoid watching him, but out of the corner of his eye he
he can see the fleeting expressions of anger, sadness and shame as they pass over the gods features.
When he is finished reading, he sets the lap top on the coffee table and goes into the kitchen to make coffee, just for something to make himself busy. While he waits for the coffee maker to finish, he scrubs a hand over his face. He pours a cup and takes it to Bucky before returning to his seat on the couch.

“I know you understand. I know you do,” Bucky begins. Loki looks stricken but says nothing.

“The bleed back. There was a little more than I may have said,” the soldier explains.

Loki stands and starts to pace around the room. “I see,” is all he says.

“You get why I don’t want Steve to know right?”

“For the same reason I didn’t want him, or you, to know what happened to me,” Loki spits.

Bucky holds up his hands to placate the god. “I know, but I do. We’re on equal footing here. You understand why I have to destroy them.”

“Revenge will do nothing to ease the burden of what you know,” Loki cautions.

“It may not, but it certainly won’t make me feel worse.”

The god smirks at the soldier, “you’re not wrong.”

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Day 214

Loki appears in Steve’s Brooklyn apartment and is surprised to see not only Bucky, but also Steve and Natasha. Bucky is up in an instant and places his body squarely between Loki and Steve. Even though neither man has moved, Bucky wants to head off a possible confrontation before it happens. Loki glares at Bucky as Steve retreats to the couch and sits next to Natasha who has been quietly observing.

“I know you’re all wondering why I asked you here today….” Bucky begins with a grin. When no one responds he says, “geez, that was a joke. Lighten up.”

Still no response from Steve or Loki and so Natasha intervenes. “We need to plan our next steps. I know this isn’t ideal for either of you, but Steve, we need Loki’s skills if we are to take out the Kiev base.”

Steve reluctantly nods his head in agreement and Natasha looks at the god, “Loki will you work with us to do what needs to be done?” she asks cryptically. Her words are not lost on the god and so he agrees. The Widow has not played him false so far and so he chooses to trust her on this.

“Great. Now that we have that settled, I think we need to hit something a little smaller first. Just to make sure we can all work together as a team.”

Steve looks at Loki who is avoiding his gaze. Natasha doesn’t wait for a response as she pulls out a file on a base located in rural Texas.

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Day 215

*Sorry for springing that on you yesterday.*
Loki debates ignoring Bucky, but ultimately decides not to hold a grudge against his friend. The god briefly muses to himself about the fact that he actually considers Bucky a friend.

*You will simply owe me-*L

Bucky rolls his eyes when he reads Loki’s message as he checks over his gear for their trip to Texas in the morning.

Day 216

“Well this is nice,” Bucky quips as he scans the compound with binoculars.

Steve gives him a look of exasperation, but says nothing as Bucky hands him the binoculars to look for himself.

“There are more guards than I expected. Getting in quietly may be difficult,” the Captain tells his team.

Bucky turns to Loki, “do you think you could, you know, take some of them out without being seen?”

“Of course,” the god responds just as he disappears.

Steve puts the binoculars back up to his eyes and watches as Loki reappears inside the fence line of the compound. Loki moves behind the first guard he sees and with a touch to the back of his head, the guard drops to the ground without even turning around. The god quickly hefts the body over his shoulder and deposits it behind an outbuilding. Steve watches Loki move across the grounds and within minutes he has cleared most of the guards.

“He is impressive,” Natasha says beside him, clearly appreciating the gods skills.

Steve just hums in response, the corners of his mouth turning down. Loki reappears back beside Bucky a moment later.

“I told you we don’t kill anyone unless absolutely necessary,” Steve snaps at him.

“Yes, Captain. I know. I suggest we move quickly though. Those men will need to be restrained. I didn’t have anything to secure them with and the suggestion I used for them to sleep could wear off at any time.”

“Oh, yeah okay. Good idea. Ready?” He asks as he looks at Bucky, who is grinning and then Natasha who, as always, betrays none of her feelings.

It doesn’t take long to infiltrate the base and move through it. There is very little intelligence for Natasha to gather, but they do find several prisoners that were being kept in the lower levels. They are scared and don’t want to leave their cells. To Steve’s surprise it is Loki that is able to get some information from one of the prisoners.

“How long have you been kept here?” he asks a young woman, about 25 years old.

“A couple of weeks maybe, hard to tell.”
“How did you come to be here?”

The young woman smiles at the handsome man in front of her before answering, “I was living on the streets. Some guy offered me some cash and a place to stay. All I had to do was let them take some blood and let them try out some drugs on me. I had a friend who got paid to do that at a lab, you know, so I figured why not.”

“What do you know what they were testing?” he asks.

“No, but Marcus got real sick after one of the tests. They took him away after that. Never came back. After that I wanted out, you know, but they wouldn’t let us go.”

“Okay, thank you,” he reaches out a hand and pats her knee from where he sits across from her.

She smiles at him again as he walks out the door of her cell. Natasha falls in step with him, “that was pretty impressive. How’d you get her to talk to you? I couldn’t get anywhere with any of the others.”

“I merely gave her a suggestion that she could trust me,” he answers.

“Hmm, good to know,” the Widow comments. “I called one of my contacts from the FBI and they’ll be here soon to finish this up. Buck and Steve are just about done, time to head out.”

 Later in the plane on the way home, Loki sits next to Natasha in the cockpit. She keeps her eyes out the windscreen as she asks him, “was it easier to keep an eye on Steve this way, without having to hide?”

Loki sighs quietly, “yes and no.”

In the back of the plane Bucky sits down next to Steve, “Loki was pretty great right?”

“You don’t have to convince me that he is good in a fight. I already know.”

“Then what is the issue, you clearly don’t want him here.”

Steve looks at his closest friend and tells him, “he is only here for you Bucky. Whatever happened between you guys when you first came back, he seems to want to help you, but me………”

Bucky rolls his eyes, “you’re an idiot, you know that?” Steve just looks at him blankly.

Day 217

“You boys want in on a little fun?” Natasha asks as soon as Steve answers his phone.

“What did you have in mind?” he answers.

“One of Alexander Pierce’s former aides has a little side action going on. Selling hydra secrets from Pierce’s laptop.”

“Sounds interesting. Send me the details,” he tells her, then asks, “you don’t want in on it?”
“I’m heading to Russia to check with an old contact to see if I can get any more information on Kiev. I’ll let you know when I get back and we can start planning.”

“Did you see that guys face when you grabbed him Loki?” Bucky laughs as he searches through the refrigerator for something to eat. “I thought he was going to pee his pants. And when he started crying when you told him the police were coming? The best!”

Steve chuckles as he flops down on the couch. “I only wish we had been able to get a copy of what was on Pierce’s laptop.”

Straightening up and shutting the refrigerator, Bucky says, “I’m gonna order some food. You guys hungry?”

“I am,” Steve answers as he looks shyly at Loki.

“I think I’ll head back home,” the god answers. Although spending the last few days with Steve and Bucky has been nice, it leaves the god feeling confused and wrong footed when he interacts with Steve directly.

“You could stay here,” Bucky offers.

Loki quirks an eyebrow at him and looks around the tiny apartment, “where?”

Steve blushes when Bucky smirks and looks at his bed.

“I’ll just go home tonight if its all the same to you Barnes.”

Day 218

Loki looks at the caller ID on his phone. Bucky usually texts and so for him to call is enough to put the god on alert.

“Can you get here now?” Steve asks before Loki can even say hello.

Loki doesn’t respond. He simply disconnects the call and appears in Steve’s apartment. The blonde is bent down checking the pulse of a dark haired man wearing full body armor. Loki looks around and can see several more men. All dead. The apartment is a total loss.

Bucky is sitting on the couch, head in his hands. Loki walks over to Steve and pulls him into the kitchen, “what happened?”

“They came for him.” Loki doesn’t need to ask who they are. “Bucky just snapped and killed them all. I tried to stop him, to pull him off. He hit me,” he tells Loki, gesturing to his black eye. “Then he just stopped, like flipping a switch.”

Loki goes and sits on the couch next to Bucky, “Barnes?” The soldier lifts his head and Loki can see the relief wash over him. “We need to get moving. You can’t stay here. Not anymore,” Loki tells him, taking charge of the situation. “Steve do you have a place we can go? Another safe house?”

The blonde thinks for a moment before he answers, “yeah, I know of a place.”

“Good, start packing up what you need, you have a car yes?”
“No,” Steve flinches back at the look Loki gives him, then quickly adds, “but I can get one.”

The god turns back to Bucky, “let’s get moving. Grab your stuff.”

Steve turns around from where he is pulling clothes out of the closet, “what about these guys?”

“Leave them. Let them be a warning for anyone else who tries to come next.”

“I can’t just leave their bodies here to rot.”

Loki scowls at him, “then call Natasha on the way, I’m sure she has some resources.”

The three men walk along the street, each carrying two duffle bags. Steve looks inside several car windows until he sees one that will work. Bucky watches the street while Loki watches Steve curiously. Setting his bags down, Steve pulls a strip of metal from a side pocket and slips it behind the window gasket. It is only a matter of seconds before he has the door open and only a few more, before he has the car started. He opens the trunk and Bucky quickly loads their bags before getting in the back seat. Loki gets in the passenger seat and looks at Steve, “where did you learn to steal a car?”

The Captain grins at him, “Nazi Germany.”

“Who owns this place?” Bucky asks as Loki opens the door from the inside, having teleported in.

“Its another safe house. Belongs to Nick Fury,” Steve tells him as he carries his bags into the house. Bucky immediately checks each room and secures all the windows before flopping down on the couch.

“Not bad. Certainly bigger than your apartment Stevie. The two bedrooms are good. Now I won’t have to sleep on the couch.”

“Which one do you want?” Steve asks his friend.

“You take the bigger one. You need more space than I do,” he smirks.

The Captain just furrows his brows, but says nothing. Loki, who has been quietly observing the conversation, steps up, “I’ll be going. You two should be okay now.”

“No! You can’t leave. What if it happens again? Look what I did to him,” Bucky points at Steve’s eye with barely restrained panic.

“Bucky, you’re fine,” Loki tries to reassure him.

“Loki, please. Just for a little while. Just until we’re sure.”

With a sigh, Loki looks to Steve who just shrugs his shoulders. “Fine Barnes, but you’re sleeping on the couch, not me.”

Bucky’s features flicker from intense relief before settling on a mischievous grin, “share with Steve. He just took that big ole’ bedroom for himself.”

Loki says nothing as Steve turns red and throws a pillow at Bucky.
“What are you looking at?” Bucky asks as he walks out of the bathroom after his shower.

“Nothing.” Loki shoves the photos back in the envelope.

“Don’t lie. It’s not nothing. You’re sitting here all mopey. Steve won’t be back from his run for a little while longer, so what’s up?”

Loki doesn’t respond, but Bucky is persistent, “let me see.”

The god hands the envelope over his shoulder to Bucky and then stands and walks into his room, shutting the door behind himself.

A few minutes later Bucky knocks on the door and leans on the door frame when Loki opens it. “Where did you get these?”

“Stark.” Bucky can feel his anger rising. Tony may be Howards son, but after spending time with him at the tower, he quickly realized Tony was not like his father. He didn’t tell Steve, but he didn’t like the billionaire and now, knowing that Tony not only spied on Steve, but gave the photos to Loki, he really dislikes him.

“Why would he give them to you?”

Loki shrugs. “He has never been keen on Steve and I.”

“Have you asked Steve about them?”

“No, I think they speak for themselves,” the god snaps.

“So you’re jealous?”

“No?”

“You don’t know if you’re jealous?”

Loki looks down at his feet, “he cheated.”

“Did he? I mean the entire time you were actually together he was with you at your cabin. Then you ended it. This had to be either before or after that, so I don’t think that’s the case,” Bucky reasons. “Besides, Steve just isn’t that kind of guy.”

For a moment Loki looks thoughtful, “perhaps you are right.” He hates to admit it, but maybe Bucky is right about the jealousy. The thought of Steve with someone else still hurts, but if Steve did seek comfort in the arms of another, the god only has himself to blame. Of course that does not excuse Stark for what he did.
My posting schedule is a bit off this week. I will not post a chapter on Saturday like I usually do. I will be at a comic convention. Tomorrow I will be channeling Loki as I cosplay him. Saturday I will be the Bucky to my daughters Captain America.
An innocent question leads to a not so innocent memory....

Chapter 43

Water Under The Bridge
Adele

If you're not the one for me
Then how come I can bring you to your knees?
If you're not the one for me
Why do I hate the idea of being free?
And if I'm not the one for you
You've gotta stop holding me the way you do
Oh, honey, if I'm not the one for you
Why have we been through what we have been through?
It's so cold out here in your wilderness
I want you to be my keeper
But not if you are so reckless
If you're gonna let me down, let me down gently
Don't pretend that you don't want me
Our love ain't water under the bridge
Say that our love ain't water under the bridge
What are you waiting for?
You never seem to make it through the door
And who are you hiding from?
It ain't no life to live like you're on the run
Have I ever asked for much?
The only thing that I want is your love
If you're gonna let me down, let me down gently
Don't pretend that you don't want me
Our love ain't water under the bridge
Say that our love ain't water under the bridge
It's so cold out here in your wilderness
I want you to be my keeper
But not if you are so reckless
If you're gonna let me down, let me down gently
Don't pretend that you don't want me
Our love ain't water under the bridge
"Do you always wear that get up to fight?" Bucky asks as he and Loki walk back in the house after picking up food.

"What’s wrong with my leathers?" Loki asks.

"Just seems a little cumbersome. Lotta layers. Doesn’t it limit your movement?"

"The leathers are pretty heavy, but without the armor pieces its not so bad," Steve answers without thinking from where he is sitting on the couch flipping through TV channels.

Bucky eyes widen ever so slightly, "and how would you know that?"

Steve rubs his hand on the back of his neck as his face reddens. "Uh well.... we ..... uh.... tried each other's uniforms."

Bucky grins, "for purely scientific reasons I’m sure."

"Um.... yeah... I guess you could say that."

Loki puts the food down and steps away from the table suddenly. "Excuse me. I think I'll go shower."

As soon as he leaves the room Bucky looks to Steve with an eyebrow raised in question. Steve just shrugs his shoulder and goes to look through the bags of food.

Loki locks the bathroom door and all but yanks his clothes off. He jerks the shower on and steps under the cold spray. As the water warms across his shoulders he takes himself in hand and begins to slowly stroke his already hard cock.

Such an innocent statement from Steve, "remember when you said I could try your leather’s back when we were on the helicarrier?"

It was a simple matter to conjure a set of both their uniforms and now Loki walks out of the bathroom and is looking at the soldier standing tall and proud in his own leathers. The sight makes Loki’s mouth go dry as the blue pants of Steve’s own uniform suddenly feel tighter on him.

Steve turns when he hears Loki behind him, "oh damn,” he whispers, taking a few steps towards the god. Loki has the shield attached to the harness and is standing with his hands at his sides.

Steve licks his lips,"let me see you holding the shield.” He takes another couple of steps closer until he is standing directly in front of the god.

Loki reaches his gloved hand back and pulls the shield off the harness and slides it on his arm. Steve swallows hard and grabs Loki by the neck and kisses him forcefully. "Bathroom," he breathes as he drags the god by the hand back into the bathroom. Loki quirks an eyebrow at the blonde who moves in to lick and suck at his neck.

"I wanna be able to see you as you take me."

Loki grins and pulls the shield off his arm, returning it to the harness across his back, then starts to
remove his gloves. Steve stops him, "leave them on."

Loki turns Steve so they are standing with Loki's chest against his back, both looking in the mirror. "Is this what you want?" Loki growls as he licks the edge of his lover's ear. Steve swallows and nods as Loki begins to run his gloved hand over his chest. "You look so good in my colors. Almost like you belong to me." As he says this he grips Steve's cock through the leather pants.

"Oh fuck, Loki."

"Such a mouth on you Steve." Loki now has both hands roaming across the front of the blondes body.

Loki reaches forward and opens a drawer pulling out a bottle of lube. He sets it on the counter and then moves his hands to the laces holding Steve's leather pants closed. He gives Steve a couple of rough strokes before pulling back. Then he works his hands to Steve's waist under the long coat and pushes the pants down to his boots. Loki straightens and places the bottle of lube in Steve's hand, "you'll have to take care of this and mind the leather."

Loki grins as he steps back to open the front of his own pants. Steve takes the lube and applies some to his fingers. He starts to work himself open while he watches Loki behind him in the mirror. "Stroke yourself," he tells the god.

Loki steps slightly to the side so Steve can see him in the mirror as he wraps his gloved hand around his cock and begins stroking slowly along his length. The sight makes Steve work faster. He wants those hands on his body. Wants to see and feel them gripping his hips tightly while the god is buried inside him.

Steve gets a little more lube and turns just enough to coat Loki's cock. Then he turns back to the mirror and meets the god's eyes as he bends forward, hands braced on the counter. Loki steps behind him, moves the long coat to the side and pushes into Steve with one solid movement.

"Yes!" Steve gasps.

The blonde looks into the mirror and watches Loki as he moves. It is so good. He doesn't even try to hold back the sounds coming from his throat. He would be embarrassed if he had the ability to think straight. And when Loki reaches up and grips the side of his neck, the rough texture of his gloves against over heated skin almost sends him over the edge right then.

The god senses this and slows his pace, "not yet, Steve."

"Please," the blonde whimpers.

"Not until I say." He pulls Steve up against his chest and looks into his eyes in the reflection.

"Loki, please," the blonde pleads again.

Pushing Steve back down he speeds up his pace and the strength of his movements. No doubt Steve will have bruises where he is being pushed against the counter. The blonde braces his hands in front of himself again and pushes back against the god.

"Are you ready Steve?"

"Yes, please......please."

Loki grabs the back of Steve's hair and forces his head up to look in the mirror. "Look Steve. Are
you ready?"

The blonde is too far gone to answer, but that’s okay. Loki doesn’t need it. He can see the desperation on his face, in the way he grips the counter top, the way his back arches as he pushes back. “Now Steve,” the god murmurs directly in his ear as he ejaculates within his lover.

Steve comes with a cry, then leans back against Loki’s chest waiting for his heart to calm as he runs his eyes over their figures in the mirror.

Loki’s seed splatters against the shower wall as he takes in a shuddering breath. He wants his lover back.

Day 221

“Loki!” The Queen smiles when her son lightly knocks on her sitting room door. “Come in, I was about to have lunch, there is plenty, join me,” she gestures to the tray of food before her.

The god sits in a chair next to his mother and watches as she begins to pick items off the tray and eat. After a few moments she notices he is not eating and so she stops, turning to him. “What is troubling you?”

Loki heaves a sigh, “am I that transparent? You must think I only come to see you when I am ill at ease.”

Frigga reaches out and rests her hand on Loki’s arm, “I am simply glad to see you. Do I wish my sons heart was not so troubled? Of course, but I am here to celebrate happy times and to help you through troubled ones as well.”

The god’s smile is strained as he rests his hand on top of his mothers. “Can a memory be removed?”

Frigga frowns, “why do you ask?”

“There is something I wish to forget. From many years ago. And yet I cannot seem to get over it. I wish to move on with my life and this….event holds me firmly in the past.”

“I’m sorry my son. There is no known way to remove a memory. Not safely.” She can see the tears forming in her child’s eyes and so she hurries to add, “the memory cannot be removed, but there is a way to weaken it to help with the reactions the memory causes. It is not an easy process and can only be attempted by a skilled mage supported by a team of healers.”

Loki clings to this small glimmer of hope and Frigga can see it in the way his face lights up. She rises from her chair and holds her hand out to him which he takes as he rises to stand beside her. She holds his hand and opens the way to Yggdrasil, they emerge within the healers rooms.

Hours later Loki is still in the healers chambers. Frigga wipes a damp cloth on his sweaty brow. She is relieved that the tremors have stopped. She had been truly frightened when he began to seize in the middle of the working. The healers were able to stabilize him enough for her to complete the task and she can only hope it has worked. The panic attack he suffered just before he started to seize, when she instructed him to concentrate on the memory, was both heartbreaking and terrifying in its
intensity. He spends the rest of the day under Frigga’s watchful eye as he sleeps with the help of a regeneration spell.

Day 222

It’s close to dinner time when the three men return to the apartment to go over the mission details from the warehouse in Manhattan they raided. Overall it was a success. They managed to shut down a major weapons smuggling ring linked to Hydra, turning over the weapons and captives to local authorities.

Loki was able to make a copy of the hard drive of a laptop found at the site and sent it to Natasha to look over to see if there are other leads to be followed up on.

Bucky orders a couple of pizzas and the three men sit in the living room discussing ways to improve communication on future missions. Steve is pleased with how they seem to mesh well as a team and not being under Shield’s thumb is liberating.

When there is a knock at the door, Loki greets the delivery guy and brings the pizzas back to the living room while Steve grabs plates and napkins from the kitchen along with glasses and drinks. The blonde takes a moment to look around the space just as he does every time the three of them are together like this. It hurts his heart a little every single time. What he wouldn’t give to have this be real, his lover and his best friend, both at his side.

Bucky can see the look on Steve’s face when he comes back from the kitchen. He has seen it enough to know the blonde is missing Loki. Making a quick decision, Bucky gets to his feet, "hey guys, I just remembered, I have somewhere to go tonight."

Loki gives him a questioning look while Steve just looks confused. "What do you mean you have to go? Go where?" He asks.

"There's this dame. Been chatting her up on my runs in the morning, think I'm getting close."

"It's 8pm. You're going running at 8pm?" Loki asks incredulously.

"Noooooo......," Bucky thinks quickly. "She was making plans to meet up with some friends at a bar close to the park tonight. Thought I'd just pop in, see what happens," he shrugs.

"That's a little creepy," Steve remarks.

"It's not creepy. She told me I could stop by."

Steve rolls his eyes at his friend and tells him to go ahead and go. When Bucky leaves, Steve and Loki are left alone.

"I should go too, maybe out for a walk or something," Steve begins.

"You don’t have to, we can be alone together. And all this food needs to be eaten."

Steve is torn between his desire to be with the god and not wanting to be hurt by getting close again. After a brief internal debate he decides to stay and sits down on the couch. "Sure, I am pretty hungry."

Loki gives a small laugh, "you're always hungry."
It's easy, so very easy to sit and talk with Loki. Steve looks up at the clock and is shocked to find it is almost midnight. He gathers up the empty pizza boxes and grabs the dirty plates, utensils and glasses, carrying it all to the kitchen. Loki follows him and leans against the counter, watching as Steve starts washing the dishes. Without thinking, he steps beside the blonde and reaches for the cup that Steve has washed. Loki begins to dry each item as Steve finishes it, placing them back in the cupboards when he is done. Each time Steve hands him a dish their fingers brush against each other. It is so familiar, so comfortable.

When the last dish is put away, Steve begins to wipe down the counters. Loki reaches out and stills his hand, "you don't have to do that."

"Look Steve, I know this isn't easy-"

"Yes it is. That's the problem. It's too easy," Steve interrupts.

Loki looks at Steve quizzically waiting for him to continue.

"Being with you. Being like this. It's so easy and I don't want it to end, but at the same time I know it's not real."

"Of course it's real. We're here aren't we?" the god reasons as he reaches out to run his thumb across Steve’s cheek. The blonde instinctively leans into the touch and closes his eyes for just a moment.

When he opens his eyes again they are full of pain and regret. He pulls back from Loki, creating a physical distance to match the emotional one he is about to make. "I can't do this. I loved you, but I can't trust you, at least not completely. Bucky trusts you and wants you here and I want to trust, but not right now. I want…. Maybe…. Maybe someday….” Steve trails off, not sure what else to say.

Loki swallows hard and nods his head, eyes trained on the floor. He can’t help but focus on Steve’s words, I loved you. Surprisingly the words don’t send him into a panic attack and he has hope that maybe his session with the healers was successful, but the past tense is almost just as bad.

Steve steps around Loki and heads for his room. "I think I’ll turn in for the night."

Day 223

Loki is sitting on his bed, with his back against the headboard when Bucky opens the door and practically jumps on the bed. “So? What happened last night?”

The corners of Loki’s mouth turned down, “nothing happened, why do you ask?”

“I just saw Steve and he seems….off. Said he was going to take a walk or something.”

“Ah, well, we watched TV, ate dinner, cleaned up, he told me he doesn’t love me, said he doesn’t trust me and that he only tolerates me being here because of you,” Loki lists off as though discussing the weather.

Bucky grimaces and ducks his head, “ouch. I’ll talk to him.”

Jerking his head up, Loki tells him, “you will do no such thing!”

“Ok, I won’t, but you understand why he is upset with you right?”
Loki glares at him, but doesn’t respond.

“Look, all I’m saying it that you’re both angry and upset. Some of it is justified and some….. maybe not so much, but you can’t expect him to forget how you rejected him and just take you back, just because now you feel like you can handle it. I know why you did it, but he doesn’t. Not really. If you want this, then you have to work for it.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm back from LA Comic Con. Had a great time as usual despite some cosplay mishaps. On Saturday I forgot my daughters Captain America armor at the hotel and we had to go back and get it. Not a big deal, just irritating and it was good that I did, I had left the glue gun on where I was making a repair and it fell over and the tip was resting on the cord...... On Sunday I somehow managed to leave her Mother Panic cape at the hotel after we checked out. The entire costume is solid white and it had somehow gotten mixed up with the bedding. We had already paid for parking and so she went without it. I walked to a nearby Target (in full mandalorian gear) and got something to improvise with. I'll get the original mailed back to me (it was not easy to make). But all in all, a great weekend. If anyone is interested, photos can be found on Instagram under user name Bocnaco.
Its Steve's turn to talk to Bucky and then he has a moment of weakness.

Over and Over
Three Days Grace

I feel it everyday, it's all the same
It brings me down, but I'm the one to blame
I've tried everything to get away
So here I go again
Chasing you down again
Why do I do this?
Over and over, over and over
I fall for you
Over and over, over and over
I try not to
It feels like everyday stays the same
It's dragging me down, and I can't pull away
So here I go again
Chasing you down again
Why do I do this?
Over and over, over and over
I fall for you
Over and over, over and over
I try not to
Over and over, over and over
You make me fall for you
Over and over, over and over
You don't even try
So many thoughts that I can't get out of my head
I try to live without you
Every time I do, I feel dead
I know what's best for me
But I want you instead
I'll keep on wasting all my time
Over and over, over and over
I fall for you
Over and over, over and over
I try not to
Over and over, over and over
You make me fall for you
Over and over, over and over
You don't even try to

Day 224

Steve is sitting in his room when Natasha calls. She has been chasing down a new lead for their strike on the Kiev Base. He confirms that she will be back in town in the next few days and will be contacting Barton so they can meet to talk about Bucky joining the Avengers.

Day 225

“It has been confirmed, the time stone is within the Eye of Agamotto.”

As usual, Thanos does not reply to his underling. “It was last in possession of the Ancient One on Midgard, a master of the mystic arts. I do not believe we will be able to take it by force.”

“Loki will be busy when he returns,” the Titan finally replies.

Day 226

Bucky flops down on the couch next to Steve. “Loki’s heading out, you want anything from the store?”

“No.”

Picking up the remote, Bucky start switching between channels. “So, you’ve been awfully quiet for a few days now. What’s up?”

“Nothing, everything’s fine.”

“You never were a very good liar. Loki’s been all mopey too. So what happened?”

Steve looks down at his hands, “do you remember Mary Jackson?”

Bucky thinks for a minute, “Brown hair, tall, pale, real smart? Right?”

“Yeah that’s her.”

Bucky waits for Steve to continue. It soon becomes apparent that he isn’t going to, but Bucky doesn’t need him to. Mary Jackson was a friend of Susie Martin, a girl Bucky was dating back before the war. Susie and Bucky fixed her up with Steve so they could go out on double dates. Steve really liked her and they seemed to get along well, right up until Bucky broke up with Susie. Mary told Steve she didn’t want to see him anymore and asked Bucky out the next day. He of course turned her down, but Steve was still crushed. He never saw it coming and he felt betrayed and used. Bucky remembers spending many nights trying to pull Steve out of a deep depression.

“Look Steve, I’m fairly certain Loki doesn’t see me like that, if that’s what you’re worried about,” Bucky tries to explain.

The blonde shakes his head. “It’s not that, well, not just that. I let myself fall for him and then he.
completely blind sided me. He sent me back, told me he doesn’t love me, said he doesn’t want to be with me and yet here he is. I don’t know what he is doing. What motive does he have?”

The corners of Bucky’s mouth turn down as he runs a hand through his hair. “Sometimes we do things and we don’t fully understand why.” He pauses for a moment. He knows why Loki did what he did. He saw the trauma the god suffered, the self doubt, the fear, but that is not for him to tell Steve and so he doesn’t. “I think he is genuinely sorry for what he did to you and I think he is here because he wants to be, not because he is after anything.”

Steve tries to ignore that little twist in his belly, that little spark of something. “Am I supposed to just forget what he did to me? Just put myself out there and hope he doesn’t do it again? Bucky, he almost destroyed me and I don’t know how to get past that. How do I trust him again?”

“You don’t, at least not right away. It will take time, but he’s here, let him earn it.”

Steve opens and closes his mouth several times, trying to formulate a response. Finally he settles on nodding his head in agreement.

Day 227

“Steve wants us to check out a building in D.C. One of the congressmen that went down with Hydra had ties to it. Not sure what’s going on there or if it is tied to Hydra, but he wants us to take a look.”

Loki nods, but otherwise does not respond to Bucky.

“He’s hurt Loki, you hurt him in a way that is going to take time to get past.”

The god briefly flicks his eyes at his friend and then looks away again.

Bucky tries again, “he’s not…he hasn’t asked you to leave.”

Finally a response from the god, “no of course not, he is tolerating me for your sake. He hasn’t hardly spoken to me for the last couple of days.”

“He will.” Loki huffs. “He will!” Bucky insists.

Day 228

“Steve! Loki’s hurt!” Bucky calls out as soon as he and the god appear in the living room.”

The blonde runs in from his bedroom and immediately moves to Loki’s side. He helps Bucky move the injured man into his own room and on to the bed. “What happened? You were only supposed to be doing reconnaissance.”

“We were,” Bucky snaps. “I was spotted and got pinned down. Loki came in and got me out. He’s bleeding pretty heavily.”

“I’m fine,” the god tells the soldiers.

Steve nods his head and starts to work the gods leathers off of him. “What about you? Are you hurt,” he asks over his shoulder to Bucky.
"I’m fine, some cuts and bruises, but that’s it. Doesn’t look like the warehouse is tied to Hydra, but there is some drug smuggling going on. I’ll call it in."

“Good,” the blonde answers as he pulls Loki’s boots off and then removes his leather pants. He immediately pulls his own shirt off and presses it to the bleeding wound at the joint between Loki’s upper thigh and hip.

“Geez, no underwear? I did not need to see that,” Bucky complains causing Steve to glance back at him again and Loki to huff out a pained laugh.

“Not helping, Bucky!” Steve scolds.

Bucky laughs at this friend, seeing that Loki’s wound is not life threatening, “wasn’t aware I was supposed to be helping.”

“Go get me the first aid kit.”

Bucky returns with the kit and opens it. He pulls out a package of gauze and hands it to Steve, taking the now bloody shirt from him. Steve holds the gauze to Loki’s wound trying to staunch the flow of blood. He can tell the flow is slowing, the gods body working to heal itself already.

Bucky knows he is not needed and so he wanders out to the living room, closing Loki’s bedroom door on the way out.

Steve lifts the gauze and can see that the blood has almost completely stopped. "It looks like it's stopped bleeding. Let me just get you bandaged up."

The blonde reaches for the medical kit and begins rummaging through it until he finds what he is looking for. He cleans the wound then places a clean piece of gauze over the wound and then covers that with tegaderm.

He tries not to look at Loki’s face or at the evidence of the gods growing arousal.

"Sorry," Loki mutters.

"It's ok, don't worry about it."

He can hear Loki’s strained exhale. "It's just....you touch me....."

Steve tries to hold back a satisfied smirk. He reaches out and checks the bandage one more time. Loki catches his wrist in his hands causing the blonde to look up at him. "Steve....." Loki breathes just before leaning forward and pressing his lips to the blondes.

For a brief moment Steve thinks about pulling away and walking out of the room, but he doesn’t. Even after everything that has happened between them, he knows he still loves the god and in this moment, it feels as though they were never apart and he wants this, despite his reservations.

They begin with soft kisses and gentle caresses that slowly begin to intensify. And when they begin to remove each other's clothing, they run their hands across flesh that they both know so well. Loki shifts to lay further back on the bed, pulling Steve with him.

"I don't want to hurt you," the blonde whispers against Loki’s lips.

A dozen thoughts run through Loki's head and he doesn't know whether to laugh or cry at Steve’s words. He settles for saying nothing, but pulls the soldier down so their bodies are touching.
When Steve feels Loki’s hand brush against his cock he closes his eyes and pulls in a deep breath. He is certain that nothing has ever felt that good, right up until the god grips him and begins to stroke. He lets out a low whimper when Loki releases him, “we need…..,” the god pants, “we need something…..to ease the way.”

The soldiers mind goes blank until he realizes what Loki is trying to say. “I don’t have anything,” the blonde replies. He tries to keep from sounding disappointed by burying his face into Loki’s neck and working the flesh with his mouth.

“No matter. I want you. Please, I need to feel you in me.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” Steve repeats pulling back and looking into the gods eyes. He repositions himself, bringing their cocks in line with one another and grips them both in his hand. He knows he won’t last long and judging by the sounds Loki is making, he is sure the god won’t either. It is hard not to thrust his hips as he tries not to put too much pressure on Loki’s wound, but it feels so good, so familiar and his body keeps trying to seek more contact, more friction.

Loki comes first with a small cry, digging his fingers into the blondes shoulders. Steve grips them harder and within a half dozen strokes, he follows close behind. When his mind clears, he takes in the mess that is now on both of their bodies. He leans off the edge of the bed and picks up the first aid kit from where it fell on to the floor and pulls out more gauze. He uses it to gently clean both of them and without a word curls his body close to Loki, just before falling asleep.

Looking at the blonde hair of the man laying beside him, Loki knows that even if Steve doesn’t love him anymore, even if this is all he can have, he will take it. He will take whatever the soldier has to offer and he will relish every moment.

Steve wakes up a few hours later and watches Loki sleep for a while. He has dreamed of this moment ever since Loki sent him away from the cabin. He doesn’t regret it, even knowing that he cannot fully trust the god.

He gets out of bed, pulls on his pants and walks out to the living room to grab his phone. Briefly, he wonders where Bucky is, until he hears soft snoring coming from his own bedroom. He sends a quick text message to Tony, knowing that even close to midnight, the billionaire will still be up.

*I’ll be at the tower by 11 for our meeting. Bucky will make a great addition to the team.*

Tony reads the text and then sets his phone back on the table without responding. He knows Steve has been working with both Bucky and Loki. Tony picks up his scotch and swallows a mouthful as he stares out the glass at the city lights.
Go to War
Nothing More

I don't know what you had in mind
But here we stand on opposing sides
Let's go to war
Let's go to war
We arm ourselves with the wrongs we've done
Name them off one by one
Let's go to war
Let's go to war
Everything you say
Everything you do
You push it in and you cut me down
And you cut me down
(War, war, war)
Screaming at the ones we love
Like we forgot who we can trust
Screaming at the top of our lungs
On the grounds where we feel safe
Do we feel safe? Do we feel safe?
Hush, my baby, make no sound
Maybe we can wait each other out
It's a cold war
Let's go to war
With every settled score
I thought that fighting with meant fighting for
But you turned it around
But you turned it around
(War, war, war)
Screaming at the ones we love
Like we forgot who we can trust
Screaming at the top of our lungs
On the grounds where we feel safe
Do we feel safe? Do we feel safe? Do we feel safe?
Do we censor or do we flow?
Are we drunk on the chemicals?
Every feeling in my bones tells me to lash out
And tell you, “fuck off”
You've got my heart and I've got your soul
But are we better off alone?
With every battle, we lose a little more
Remember everything that we died for
You are everything that I die for
Screaming at the ones we love
Like we forgot who we can trust  
Screaming at the top of our lungs  
On the grounds where we feel safe

Day 229

Loki wakes up in bed alone. He stares at the ceiling and tries not to cry, but then he hears voices. Getting up, he pulls on a pair of pajama pants and then stands at the door listening to Bucky and Steve talking.

“It was a mistake Buck. I shouldn’t have let it happen.”

“Then why did you?”

“Because I’m weak. Because I miss him. Because he kissed me and……and I just wanted it.”

Bucky grins at his friend.

“That doesn’t mean it wasn’t a mistake,” Steve insists.

“Do you regret it?”

The blonde doesn’t answer the question, “I just wish I could trust him.”

Loki schools his face into a mask of passivity and opens his door. He goes to the kitchen, acting like everything is normal and nothing happened the night before. Brown eyes and blue eyes both turn to watch the god as he opens and closes several cabinets.

“I’m gonna head out for a little while. Loki, is it ok if I use your room to change?” Bucky asks.

The god waives his approval to Bucky and turns to open the refrigerator.

Bucky steps back out from Loki’s room within moments, still wearing the same clothes. He has an envelope in his hand that he slaps against Steve’s chest as he walks out, “I’ll be back later.”

Loki turns from the open refrigerator to watch Bucky leave. When he turns back, his eyes glide over Steve and the envelope he has in his hands. He silently curses Bucky Barnes as he walks to the living room and sits in the chair next to the couch where Steve is sitting. The blonde gives him a confused look as he lifts the envelope. Loki just looks at him as he sits on the edge of his chair.

Reaching over, Steve grabs one of the pillows off the couch and pulls it into his chest as he opens the envelope and slides out the pictures inside.

He can feel the god tense from the chair beside him. Looking at the images he feels his heart sink. The soldier doesn’t have to ask where they came from, but he does need to know one thing, “how long have you had these?”

“Stark gave them to me that night in the infirmary in his tower.”

Steve knows immediately what night Loki is referring to. The one where Loki came to talk to him and Steve had so much hope, right up until Loki crushed his heart, calling him collateral damage. When he thinks back, he even remembers seeing that same envelope in the gods hands.

Loki shifts uncomfortably in the chair, "I know I have no right to ask, but can you tell me; when did this happen?”
The soldier opens his mouth to respond when the alarm for his phone goes off. He looks at it and scowls. “I’m sorry Loki, I have to go. The Avengers are meeting today. We’ll talk later ok? We need to talk about this.” Steve stands up and places the pictures back in the envelope just before he grabs his keys and jacket and walks out.

Loki sits back in his chair, puts his head in his hands and stays that way until Bucky returns.

Steve opens the door to the conference room Jarvis directed him to. He is the last one to arrive. Nodding his head in greeting to everyone, he takes a seat. As he walks past Tony he can smell the alcohol on him.

Steve is there because he wanted to have Bucky join the Avengers, but he really started to reconsider that decision on the way over after seeing those photos. He stays calm even though he wants to reach across the table and strangle Tony. Instead, he sits and tries to ignore the voice in the back of his head questioning what he really does want. He listens to his team as Tony and Clint talk about all the reasons Bucky should not be an Avenger, noting the slight slur to Tony’s words. After several minutes the Captain interrupts them, “I think we all get it. I assume you both vote no.” He looks to Bruce, who puts his hand in front of his mouth in a nervous gesture.

“I don’t know him well enough to agree to him joining. Maybe in time, but I don’t think right now is the best idea.”

Steve purses his lips and looks at Natasha. He knows it really doesn’t matter at this point, but he does it anyway.

“Steve, I know he’s your friend,” she begins. “and you work well together-“

“Do they?” Stark cuts her off. “Because we don’t know how they work. Ever since Bucky came back in the picture he hasn’t been around.” Tony turns and addresses Steve directly. “You’re our supposed leader and what have you been doing? Running around with Bucky and Loki on this crusade to bring down Hydra. And this is after the complete melt down you had on our missions.” Tony pauses. He can see the anger as it builds behind Steve’s eyes and instinctively begins to fiddle with the metal cuff around his wrist. “Try to deny it, go ahead, but we all know how many times you wound up in the infirmary.”

Clint speaks up, “Cap, it’s a matter of trust. We have to be able to trust you,” Steve jerks his head up and narrows his eyes at the archer wondering where he is going with this. “Between Loki and now Bucky, I don’t think you should be making decisions for the team.”

The Captain frowns, “what exactly are you saying Clint?”

To his credit, Clint doesn’t back down from the look Steve is giving him, “I’m saying I think Tony needs to take over as leader. And I’m also saying we need to really ask ourselves if you should even be an Avenger at all at this point.”

Steve pushes his chair back and stands, the voice in his head screaming at him. Tony also stands, albeit a little unsteadily, raising his right hand defensively. Beside him Bruce speaks up, “I think that’s going a little far Clint,” but he keeps his eyes on Tony.

The blonde notes Tony’s stance and takes a deep breath to try and control his anger, then looks at Natasha, trying and failing to get a read on her opinion. “Bruce, its alright. I understand you all don’t trust me, but are you sure you should be trusting Stark?” Steve pulls the pictures out of his jacket,
takes them out of the envelope and throws them on the table. Tony flinches back and twists his wrist, causing one of the Iron Man gloves to deploy around his hand. The voice in Steve’s head quiets.

“What are these?” Natasha asks as she picks up one of the images.

“Ask Stark,” Steve says flicking his eyes to the man who is still standing with this hand outstretched. “Ask him why he had them and why he gave them to Loki.”

All eyes turn to the billionaire. “You want to know why?” he asks caustically. “I watched my father dedicate his life to finding you. The great Steve Rogers. Everything I ever did was measured against you and I was never quite good enough. And then you come back and you’re not at all what you led Howard to believe.” Tony’s voice rises with each sentence until he is nearly shouting. “You’re not this great hero. You’re just a man and not even a very good one. Everything special about you came out of a bottle. I spent my entire life trying to live up to Howard’s memory of you and it was a lie. You don’t deserve to be on this team, forget about leading it.” He lets his arm drop slightly.

“Tony that’s enough,” Bruce warns.

“No!” he shouts. “Its not enough! He’s fucking Loki! A mass murderer. How is that ok?”

He puts an image up on the screen of a young man and calmly asks, “do you know who this is?” He doesn’t wait for an answer. “No of course you don’t. This is Jason Middleton. Son of Alice and Roy Middleton. Alice works as a receptionist for R and D. Pepper had me sign off on some assistance funds so Alice and Roy could bury their son. Turns out he was a low level analyst working for shield. Nothing special, but he died when Loki destroyed that shield base when he first arrived.” He changes the picture. “This is Lisa Armstrong. Single mother of 2. Her girls are living with their aunt now.” He changes it again. “Jane Mathis. Single, attending night school to finish her degree. Do you need to see more? There are over 80 of them. And apparently you don’t see a problem with it.”

“I never said that,” Steve responds through gritted teeth.

“You didn’t have to say it. Fucking him is enough.” Tony is enjoying the reaction he is getting and his alcohol addled brain doesn’t quite register the danger in provoking the super soldier just a little more. “Or does he fuck you? Are you his little bitch Rogers?”

“Tony,” Bruce says, trying to get the billionaires attention as Steve slams his fist down on the conference table, denting it. He hears the whine of the repulsor in Tony’s glove just before he feels the blast hit his chest. He reacts on instinct and is over the table in an instant, fist drawn back. He pulls his punch at the last moment, knowing that as angry as he is, he would never forgive himself for seriously hurting Tony. Even so, the blow knocks the billionaire off his feet and into the wall where he slides down to the ground.

The room erupts in chaos. Natasha leaps to Tony’s side to see how badly he is hurt. Bruce stands and backs towards the door as he feels his control starting to slip. Clint is on his feet, bow in his hand. Steve is bent over, hand pressed against his chest.

From the floor, Tony says, “Jarvis play the last video.”

A black and white video begins to play. There is no sound and it appears to come from a surveillance camera. Steve watches as a car comes into view and then a motorcycle. Even with the poor quality of the video he can see the glint off the riders metal arm and his stomach sinks. He watches the car crash into a tree. He watches the motorcycle rider get off the bike and take off his helmet, removing any doubt that the figure is James Barnes.
With mounting horror, he watches as his best friend murders Howard and Maria Stark.

“Guys,” a soft voice speaks up from near the door. “We need to just stay calm.”

“It’s fine Bruce. I think we all know where this is going and what needs to happen,” Steve says calmly.

When the end came it wasn’t with a glorious battle. Instead it came at a conference table in a nondescript room at Stark Tower. It came with tension and accusations and anger. It came with sadness and grief over the thought of losing the new life Steve had been building, but it did not come with regrets.

Bucky has called Steve’s phone several times. He gave up leaving voicemails after the 3rd time. Finally he asks Loki to text him.

_Getting a little worried where are you-L_

There is no answer.

_Just tell me you’re ok-L_

Still no answer.

_Steve answer me-L_

Just as Bucky is getting ready to call Natasha, Loki’s phone buzzes.

_Need some time to think. I’ll be back_

Both men heave a sigh of relief.

_What happened? What do you need to think about? Is there anything we can do-L_

_we’ll talk when I get back._
Chapter 46

Chapter Summary

Steve and Loki finally have that long overdue talk.

Beautiful Pain
Andy Black

Your life was a shooting star
That burned out way too fast
And all the memories
Of a dream that's built to last
Don't wanna wait, wanna wait, wanna wait
For my next panic attack, no
Don't wanna wait, wanna wait, wanna wait
For my next crash
It's a beautiful pain
It's a beautiful pain
When I remember the good times
When I remember the good
It's a beautiful pain
It's a beautiful pain
When I let go of the heartache
When I let go of your heart
All the times that I keep holding onto
Even though you're gone
And the nights that I keep holding back the tears
I hope you found what you're looking for
I pray that you're happy now
You're never looking back
Rest with the angels now
At heaven's gate you laugh
Don't wanna wait, wanna wait, wanna wait
Cause you're never coming back, no
Don't wanna wait, wanna wait, wanna wait
For the last dance
It's a beautiful pain
It's a beautiful pain
When I remember the good times
When I remember the good
It's a beautiful pain
It's a beautiful pain  
When I let go of the heartache  
When I let go of your heart  
All the times that I keep holding onto  
Even though you're gone  
And the nights that I keep holding back the tears  
I hope you found what you're looking for  
Don't say goodbye tonight  
And leave forever  
All the times that I keep holding onto  
Even though you're gone  
And the nights that I keep holding back the tears  
I hope you found what you're looking for

Day 230

“Did Steve come back last night?” Loki asks as he walks out of his room and heads past Bucky in to the kitchen.

“Not yet. I’m not sure if I should try calling him again or not.”

“If he’s not back by lunch time, you should call Natasha and see if she has seen him,” Loki suggests.

Bucky nods in agreement.

Loki is pacing the living room floor when he hears someone attempting to open the door. Bucky’s head jerks up and both men look, on high alert, but hoping Steve has come back.

Immediately Loki can see the sadness and exhaustion on the blondes face as soon as he enters the room. He rushes forward and takes his coat and ushers him in to the living room to sit on the couch beside Bucky.

“What happened?” Bucky asks with a concerned look to the god.

Steve shakes his head.

“Are you okay?” Bucky tries.

A jerk of his head is all the response Steve gives.

“Do you need anything?” Loki asks.

Steve looks up at the god. To Loki he looks lost and very young. “I need…….. I…,” he pauses and looks around the room before focusing back on Loki. “I need……..”

“Okay,” Loki interrupts as he reaches out both his hands. He pulls Steve to his feet and walks with him to his bedroom. Loki glances back at Bucky before closing the door and guiding the blonde to sit on the edge of the bed. The god kneels in front of Steve and removes his shoes and socks. He stands and pulls Steve’s t shirt over his head then gently pulls Steve back to his feet so he can unbutton and remove the soldiers pants. Once Steve is down to his boxer shorts, Loki helps him to lay down under the covers and then works on removing his own clothes. He climbs in to bed next to
Steve and pulls him in close. He can feel the blonde’s arms wrap around him and he responds by running his hand up and down Steve’s back until he falls into a deep sleep.

Loki wakes up and the first thing he notices is that Steve is no longer in bed with him. He glances at the clock on the bed stand and can see the glowing numbers telling him it is just after 11:00pm. The god sits up, letting the blankets pool around his waist. A movement out of the corner of his eye catches his attention. He turns his head and can see the dark shadow of Steve’s form sitting in a chair in the corner of the room.

“Steve?” Loki calls out lightly.

The blonde shifts, but doesn’t respond.

Loki pulls the blanket back and moves to stand, but Steve stops him. “Wait. Can you stay?”

The god swallows and nods, even though he isn’t even sure Steve can see it. “If that’s what you want.”

Loki sits back against the headboard, saying nothing. The silence stretches on for several minutes until Steve finally speaks.

“When you sent me back,” the soldier begins, “the second time, after I found you in Colorado, I was…… not in a good place. Tony invited me over. I thought I was going to hang out with the team. He had this mead that Thor left and I thought…. It doesn’t matter what I thought. He had these girls over. I don’t know what he was trying to do,” he pauses. “Actually that’s not true, I know exactly what he was doing. At least, now I do. I drank too much and ended up in a room with the guy from the pictures. His name is Leon.”

Steve stands from the chair and walks over to the bed where he moves the blankets and sits next to the god. He draws the blankets up to his waist and continues, “We, uh…….. you saw the pictures. I had too much to drink and I thought it was you.” He shakes his head, “that’s not true either. I wanted it to be you. I wanted to pretend it was you.”

He looks at Loki in the darkness, “what was in those pictures, it didn’t go much farther than that. He was about to…. he wanted to……,” Steve furrows his brow and licks his lips. “I stopped him before he could, uh, do anything else.” The blonde gives a humorless chuckle, “nothing would have happened anyways. My body knew it was wrong before my head did. I wasn’t able to……I couldn’t get excited.”

Loki doesn’t respond to anything Steve has told him. He just waits for the blonde to get out everything he needs to say.

“I quit the Avengers yesterday.” If Loki is shocked by this, he doesn’t show it. “When I came out of the ice, I was struggling with being in this time, with the changes, with everything that I lost. I signed on with SHIELD and when Fury asked me to lead the Avengers, I had thought that maybe I would find my place in the world. Maybe these people could become my friends, the family I lost. I was meeting with them because I wanted to make Bucky an Avenger.”

Reaching over, Loki lays his hand on top of Steve’s, silently urging him to continue.

“Ultimately they decided they didn’t want Bucky and also didn’t want me as their leader. They want Tony to lead them and I don’t know if I can ever forgive him for what he did to you, to us. But when I think about what Bucky did to him……..”
When he doesn’t continue, Loki prompts him, “What did Bucky do?”

Steve swallows and Loki can feel him start to tremble, “he killed his parents. He killed Howard.” Loki knows exactly who Howard Stark is and what he meant to Steve. He can’t help but glance at the bedroom door and think about the man just on the other side. “He’s my friend, my best friend and he……he……”. The blonde trails off.

Steve shifts on the bed to lay down, moving closer to Loki as he does. He places his head in Loki’s lap and closes his eyes. The god automatically starts to run his fingers through the soldiers hair, “I’m tired Loki. Tired of being alone, of everything being taken from me. Tired of not knowing where I belong.”

“Then rest. And know that you are not alone.”

“No, not yet. We still need to talk about this. About us.”

“Rest Steve. I will be here when you wake.”

The soldier squeezes his eyes shut and nods his head. He decides to trust and prays that this time he is not wrong and when he wakes hours later, he notes with relief that the god is still there.

Day 231

Loki is in the kitchen making a sandwich to take to Steve when Bucky leans on the counter next to him. “How is he?”

Loki looks over at his friend, “better today, I think. He is hungry, so that’s a good sign,” he replies lifting the sandwich to make his point. “If you want to talk to him, I’m sure he would be more receptive today.”

“If he asks for me, sure, but otherwise……. you’ve got it under control.”

The god nods and moves to take the sandwich and a glass of water in to Steve. Bucky places his hand on Loki’s arm to stop him. “Thank you. For taking care of him. He was always so stubborn, insisting on doing everything himself, on trying not to appear weak.”

“My taking care of him is not unprecedented, as you know. I think he just feels comfortable with it.”

“Exactly. Thank you,” Bucky repeats.

Loki nods and then opens the door to Steve’s room. The blonde is sitting up in bed, staring out the window. “Bucky asked how you are doing.”

Without turning his head, Steve responds, “did you tell him the truth? That I am sulking in here, feeling sorry for myself? That I don’t know how to face him right now, knowing what he did. That even though I know he was under Hydra’s control, I am still having a hard time processing this.”

Loki sets the sandwich and water on the night stand and kneels at the side of the bed. “I told him you were hungry,” the god smiles softly.

The blonde responds with a small smile of gratitude as Loki hands him the plate of food.

When he is done eating, Loki sets the plate aside and climbs back in the bed, allowing Steve to curl his body around him as he has done for most of the past 24 hours.
Day 232

“I’m afraid I don’t have a bathing pool to carry you to, but I am going to insist that you get up and take a shower. However, I will carry you if I have to,” Loki tells Steve with a smile to show he is teasing.

The blonde smiles shyly back at him. “I don’t think that will be necessary. I’m sure I can manage on my own.”

“Good. I don’t want you to get spoiled.” Loki can’t help but be irritated at himself for the disappointment he feels.

“I may need some help washing my back. You know, if you, uh, wanted to help.” Steve can feel the flush that spreads across his face and down his neck.

Loki has to try and control the grin that threatens to break out across his face. “I believe I can do that.” He rises from the chair and pulls Steve up by the hand, leading him to the attached bath. The blonde begins to undress, dropping his clothes in a pile on the floor while Loki reaches in and turns the water on, adjusting the temperature at the same time.

Loki urges the blonde to step in the shower then moves back and leans against the counter. Almost immediately, Steve pulls the curtain back, “I thought you were going to help me.”

The god snorts out a laugh, pleased that Steve has started to come out of his depression, and begins to pull off his clothes. He steps in the shower and stands behind the blonde. Reaching forward, he grabs the soap and works up a lather, before gently beginning to wash Steve’s back. “When you are feeling up to it, we still need to talk about whats going on here. With us and about Bucky.”

“I know,” the soldier responds as he tilts his head forward and lets the water cascade over his head and down his back.

Loki reaches for the shampoo and begins to wash Steve’s hair, letting his fingers massage his scalp and then down the back of his neck and across his shoulders, relaxing the soldiers body as he goes. He hates to disturb the blonde now that some of the tension is finally leaving him, but he does not want to put this off any longer. “I know I hurt you,” he begins. “There were many reasons why I sent you back, but they all come down to fear. I was certain you would see how unworthy I am of your affections and would leave. I thought to spare myself the pain that I knew was coming. In doing so, I hurt you terribly and I lost your trust.”

Steve is quiet for a moment before he responds, “I wish I knew why you felt like I was going to leave you. I don’t understand what I did wrong to make you think that.”

The conversation is painful and Loki is glad that Steve is facing the wall so he doesn’t have to look into those beautiful blue eyes while he talks. “Every time you talked about going back, it felt like you were telling me you didn’t want to be with me anymore, like a rejection and I knew that once you returned to your team, it was inevitable.”

“So you rejected me first,” Steve concludes. “And when you kept coming around? I knew you were there, watching me.”

Loki shifts so he can work his hands along the contours of Steve’s back, gliding his palms across water slicked skin. “I found that I couldn’t stay away. It didn’t take long to figure out what you were doing, trying to draw me out.”
Steve hums, “it worked.” With a soft chuckle Loki agrees.

“And now?” the blonde prompts, with a serious tone. “How do I know it would be different this time? I want to trust you, but I don’t know that I can. I can’t go through that again. Not now. Not with everything else.”

Loki lays his head on Steve’s shoulder as he wraps his arms around his waist. Steve responds by tilting his own head back and leaning back against the god’s chest. “I’m here now. I’m trying to earn your trust. When I went to Asgard to see my mother, she and the healers did something. To help me with some traumatic memories. Memories that made me react in ways that I could not control. Ways that hurt you.”

Alarmed, Steve twists in the god’s arms and turns to face him. “You let them mess with your mind?”

“I had to.”

The blonde is almost afraid to ask, but he needs to know, “what memories?”

Even though he doesn’t want to do this, Loki knows he must, if he wants to earn back Steve’s trust. With a deep breath, Loki turns his head away and begins to talk. Within minutes, Steve has pulled him into a tight embrace and gently strokes his hair. They stay that way long after the god quiets. It is only as the water begins to run cold that Steve releases him and they step out of the shower.

When they are back in bed, Steve’s body once again wrapped around Loki, the blonde quietly speaks up, “when I told you I loved you….that made it worse, didn’t it? You tried to tell me not to say it.”

Loki doesn’t respond, he just tightens his grip around the soldier. Steve’s heart clenches with the knowledge that he will not be able to utter those words to the god again and will not hear them being returned.
Chapter 47

Chapter Summary

In case you were wondering where Odin has been..... And Loki rallies the troops.

Chapter 47

The Other side

Red Sun Rising

I know I'm not as hot as the flame
That burned here before me
I've been flipping through all your moments
And tearing out memories

How long how, long can you carry this note?
How low, how low can we keep digging this hole?
Until we come out on the other side

Crawling through mud, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
Falling from grace, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
The other side
The other side
Where you come out alone

Trying to wash all of my sins clean
I've gotten too filthy
The drain is full but still circles beneath me
Like a fool to sanity

How long, how long can you carry this note?
How low, how low can we keep digging this hole?
Until we come out on the other side

Crawling through mud, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
Falling from grace, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
The other side
The other side
Where you come out alone
Will you come out alone?
Will you come out at all?
Will you come out alone?

Yeah, yeah, crawling through mud, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
Falling from grace, what's the difference
When you come out on the other side?
The other side
The other side
On the other side, the other side
Where you come out alone

Day 233

“Why aren’t you sleeping?”

“I was,” Loki responds from where he is sitting on the couch. The rising sun is just barely visible through the window.

Bucky steps into the living room from where he had been standing in the doorway to Loki’s bedroom, “ahh…so what were you dreaming?”

Loki gives a small smile and nods in the direction of Steve’s room where he has been sleeping each night with the soldier. “The Captain. He is often the subject of my dreams….. and my nightmares. I am unable to save him.”

“Save him from what?”

“From myself.”

Bucky just waits for the god to continue.

“He was laid out on a bed. I thought he was sleeping, but then I could see where he had been cut open. Along his chest,” he lifts his hand to indicate his own chest, “and his hands had been severed and re attached. His lips were sewn shut. When I moved, he opened his eyes. There was such fear and he opened his mouth to scream ripping out the sutures, but he had no voice.” Loki shudders as he recalls his nightmare. “I reached out to him, but I couldn’t get close to him no matter how much I tired and then Odin and Thor were there holding me back. Steve tried to get off the bed but the wound in his chest began to open and…… that’s all I remember.” The god looks towards the window trying to avoid eye contact.

“That sounds pretty intense.”

Loki shrugs, “I should probably go back to bed. I don’t want him to wake up alone.”

Bucky glances at the door, “how is he doing?”

A soft smile comes to the gods lips, “better.”

Day 234
Loki wakes up alone. He can hear the shower running and so he stretches his body before getting out of bed and padding in to the bathroom. In the four days since Steve quit the Avengers, Loki has spent most of his time by Steve’s side. Holding him, listening to him, consoling him as needed. The contact between the two men has been decidedly non sexual since their encounter after Loki got hurt, both men not wanting to rush things, but each day Steve has pushed those boundaries a little more. And last night, just before falling asleep, when Steve pulled him close and kissed him, leaving him breathless and more than a little aroused….

Shedding the pajama bottoms he sleeps in, Loki pulls back the shower curtain. Immediately his stomach clenches at the sight before him. Steve stands with his head down, left hand braced against the wall, allowing the water to run down his back. His eyes are closed and his right hand is slowly working along the length of his engorged cock.

Steve turns his head towards Loki, but doesn’t open his eyes and does not stop the movement of his hand. If anything, his hand begins to move faster. The god swallows hard and steps in to the shower, standing behind the blonde. He presses his body close to Steve’s back and runs one hand over his stomach and up his chest while the other is placed over Steve’s own. He can feel the blonde’s breath quicken at his touch. Placing soft kisses on the soldier’s shoulder, Loki allows Steve to set the pace and rhythm of theirs hands.

Within minutes Loki can feel Steve’s body tense and then relax as his ejaculate splatters against the shower wall. The god continues to hold him close even though his own arousal is demanding attention. He knows Steve can feel his need as their bodies are pressed together.

Twisting in his arms, the soldier pulls Loki into a deep kiss and when his mouth opens, Loki takes the invitation for what it is. Steve kisses down Loki’s neck, across his collar bone and then moves to slide down to his knees. He uses his hand to give the god a couple of slow strokes before flicking his tongue out and licking the tip of his cock. The groan that comes from deep within the gods chest is satisfying to hear and spurs Steve on. He wraps his lips around the head and begins to work the underside with his tongue as he gently applies suction. The hand gripping his hair lets him know that his efforts are appreciated and so he takes more of the god in, stopping only when he can go no further.

Both of Loki’s hands are in Steve’s short hair, fingers roaming, massaging, as he fights the urge to thrust into that beautiful mouth. When he looks down at the gorgeous man kneeling before him, he knows he is done for and his grip tightens in the blonde hair, holding Steve still as he finds his release within that amazing mouth.

When Steve has swallowed down all that he can, he leans back and allows Loki to pull him gently back to his feet. The rest of their shower is spent in comfortable silence as they move to wash each others bodies, pausing only for soft caresses and gentle kisses.

Steve sits beside Loki on the bed, both of them with their backs against the head board. The blonde takes the gods hand in his own, “thank you.”

Loki looks at him quizzically waiting for clarification.

“For being here. For allowing me to wallow in self pity. But its time. I need to pick myself back up and as hard as it may be, I need to talk to Bucky. I knew what he did when he was under Hydra’s control, but I was able to look beyond it. It wasn’t until I knew about Howard and Maria that it really bothered me. Suddenly it was personal, there was a name and a face that I knew. I’ve thought a lot over the last few days about what that means to me and I realized that this was personal for a lot of
people, all of the people he killed. I thought about what Hydra took from me and what they did to him. All of those deaths rest solely on Hydra’s head and it’s time we finished this.

Day 235

Natasha looks at the caller ID on her phone. She picks it up and answers, not sure what to expect.

“We’re going after Kiev. We need everything you’ve got.”

“Okay. I can send you a file,” she answers cautiously.

“No, bring everything. Be here tomorrow. 8am.” The god ends the call and places the next one.

“Fury,” the former Director answers.

“The Captain and I are having a little get together tomorrow, 8am. We’d like you to attend.”

“Oh? What’s the occasion?”

Loki stands up and walks closer to Steve’s bedroom door, where he can hear him still talking to Bucky. “We’re planning a surprise party for some old friends of Steve’s.”

There is no delay in the response, “I’ll be there.”

“I trust you know where we are?”

The god can almost hear the smile when Fury responds, “of course. Is it okay if I bring by some of my friends? They may be interested.”

“By all means.”

Loki disconnects the call and knocks lightly on Steve’s door and then pushes it open. The blonde gives him a warm smile as soon as he see’s him. “We’re all set for tomorrow. I am going to Asgard now for Thor. I should be back within a couple of hours.”

Steve stands and walks over to the god, reaching out and squeezing Bucky’s shoulder on the way. The Captain pulls Loki into a needful kiss and only releases him when Bucky clears his throat behind him.

Loki grins at Bucky and then disappears. He reappears in front of Heimdall. The tall dark skinned man looks at the god briefly before returning his gaze outward.

“I am here for Thor,” Loki tells him. “Will you tell me where to find him?”

“Thor is with the All Father. They have just returned from touring the training grounds.”

Loki nods as he thinks about how to proceed.

“The All Father knows you have been visiting the Queen,” Heimdall announces.

“I find that hard to believe. He’s knows and yet made no move against me?”

Once again Heimdall flicks his gaze towards the god, “you showed yourself to me, Trickster, when you were here with the Queen. Under her direction, I can turn my gaze away, but when you
appeared directly before me, it was my duty to inform him.”

“I see.”

“The All Father has not asked me to look for you Loki.”

The god nods, “thank you Heimdall.” He opens the way to Yggdrasil and steps out into the throne room before Thor and King Odin.

Thankfully there are few people in the throne room at the moment, even so, all conversation stops as everyone turns to look upon the fallen prince. Unsurprisingly, it is Thor who breaks the silence.

“Loki, why have you come?”

The god rolls his eyes, “nice to see you too Thor.”

The blonde god rises from where he had been sitting next to the All Fathers throne. He approaches his brother and clasps his arm at the elbow before pulling him into a hug. Loki reluctantly reaches up and embraces his brother briefly before stepping back.

“I have come to ask for your assistance. The Captain will be leading an attack on several strongholds and he could use your help.”

Thor grins, “I would be honored. When do we leave?”

Glancing up quickly at the All Father, Loki responds, “as soon as possible.”

“Then we must not delay,” Thor answers as he turns and in his excitement for battle, makes his way out of the throne room, without a word to his father.

Loki moves to follow him, but is stopped by the strong voice of the All Father. “Loki.”

“Odin,” Loki responds, keeping his back to the All Father.

“You’re crimes have yet to be settled.”

“I know.”

“Your mother tells me you have taken up with a Midgardian. Their lives are so fleeting, that path can only lead to pain.”

Loki finally turns to face the man he called father. “I know of pain All Father.”

The King looks at Loki with an appraising eye, “yes I suppose you do.” After a moment, he continues, “I will grant you a stay, for as long as your mortal lives. Make good use of your time Loki.”

Loki tries to hide his shock as he stammers, “thank you…..All Father.” Then he turns on his heel to follow Thor.
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

Steve meets his team for Kiev and plans are made.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 48

I am the Future

Alice Cooper

When does a dream become a nightmare?
When do we do what must be done?
When do we stand and face the future?
When there is nowhere left to run?
And you've got to learn
Just how to survive
You've got to learn
How to keep your dream alive
Take a look at my face
I am the future
How do you like what you see?
Take a look at my face
I belong to the future
And you belong to me
When does a dream become a nightmare?
When do we learn to live with fear?
When we cry out for some salvation?
Why is it no one seems to hear?
You've got to learn
It's up to you
If you can learn
That the dream just might come true
Take a look at my face
I am the future
How do you like what you see?
Take a look at my face
I belong to the future
The world belongs to me, yeah
It's all mine
Just take a look at my face
I'm the future, no disgrace
Take a look at my face
This world belongs to... to me

Day 236

There is a sharp knock on the door at ten minutes to 8. Loki looks through the peep hole to see former Director Nick Fury standing just outside the door. Behind him, Loki can see the shapes of three other people. The god opens the door and steps back as Fury and his guests enter.

Steve rises from his chair and sizes up the new comers as Fury makes introductions. “This is Sam Wilson, code name Falcon,” he says gesturing to a tall dark skinned man. He then points to a slim brunette, “Scott Lang, also known as Ant Man.”

Scott reaches his hand out to the Captain, “Captain America, its such an honor to meet you sir.”

Steve smiles shyly, “thank you.” He turns to the third person standing in the entry way.

The man stands tall and regal and Loki looks appraisingly at him, instantly recognizing royalty when he see’s it. The dark skinned man steps forward, “I am T’Challa from Wakanda.”

Loki tips his head in greeting, “I understand that Wakanda is quite lovely.”

“Yes it is.” T’Challa can see the question in the gods eyes. “I was already in New York meeting with Director-“

“Former Director,” Fury interrupts.

“Yes, former Director Fury,” T’Challa concludes.

Steve raises an eyebrow and walks back to sit in his chair again. Just as Fury is about to explain, there is a second knock on the door. This time Bucky answers it, once he verifies it is Natasha.

Thor steps out of the bathroom, freshly showered and the introductions begin again.

“As I was saying, I was asked to come discuss options for rebuilding the Avengers,” T’Challa says. “Rebuilding?” Steve asks. “It’s only been a week.”

This time it is Natasha who responds, “a lot can happen in a week.”

The blonde glances at Loki, knowing full well that a week is more than enough time to completely change your life. “I thought you wanted Tony to take over.” It is a statement, not a question.

“I didn’t want that.”

Steve narrows his eyes at the woman, “you didn’t object when Tony blasted me.”

“I didn’t know about those pictures or about Howard. That was not how I expected that to go.”

“And now?”

“Now?” She repeats. “Tony has crawled inside a bottle and Clint took off again.”
“I thought Clint wanted Tony to lead,” the blonde sneers.

Natasha flicks her eyes to Loki, “he just didn’t want it to be you. He thinks you betrayed him. Being with Loki.”

Steve elects to ignore that comment. “And Bruce?”

“Neutral. He has to keep his distance, from both sides. But Steve, I wasn’t wrong. You don’t belong with the Avengers.” Steve looks at her in shock before she gestures to Loki and then to Bucky, “you belong here.”

Steve’s mouth is set in a tight line as he sits deeper into his chair. “I never meant to tear the Avengers apart.”

Loki can see the guilt as it settles on the blondes features. “A word Steve?” He gestures to the bedroom they have been sharing and walks that way, confident that the soldier will follow. He turns and closes the door behind Steve before pulling him into his arms. “Stop. Right now. You are not responsible for this.”

“Of course I am.”

“No, if anyone is to blame, it is me. I am the one who came here, who killed all those people, who took over Barton’s mind. Their problem is with me.”

“Even if you weren’t here, Tony would have hated me because of Bucky.”

“Did you send me here? Did you brainwash Bucky to be a killer?”

When Steve doesn’t respond the god answers for him, “no, you did not. You did what you thought was right as you have always done. And were you listening to Natasha? She is right, you belong here, with us.”

Steve looks down at his feet, unable to meet the gods eyes. Loki uses a finger to lift the blondes chin, “you said it was time to finish this. Let’s go do it.” He leans forward and captures Steve’s lips with his own. The blonde immediately deepens the kiss, opening his mouth as he reaches up to grip the gods hair.

When they pull apart, Steve is smiling, "let's go."

Bucky brings the chairs from the dining room and once everyone is seated, Natasha plugs a lap top into the TV so she can show the group the intel that has been gathered.

There is the main base in Kiev and she was able to identify two other smaller sites. She explains that the main base is where the Winter Soldier program is housed. The smaller bases are used as labs and operational facilities for high ranking Hydra leaders. All three will need to be destroyed.

Day 237

“How did you get this?” Loki asks Fury as he gestures to the plane sitting on the runway of a small private airstrip.

“I have friends in low places. We should probably leave it at that,” the bald man answers.

The god smiles, “Steve wants to leave day after tomorrow. Is that enough time you think?”
“Natasha and Barnes are working on getting the gear we need. We’ll be ready.”

Day 238

“Have you located the soul stone?”

The other lowers his head, knowing Thano’s will be displeased. “No I have not. The tesseract is still unaccounted for as well.”

“We will need to move against Asgard soon to secure the gauntlet. Loki will bring me the scepter and the time stone.”

“Are we sure he can be trusted?”

“He will do his part. You need to do yours and find the tesseract and the soul stone.”

Day 239

Loki wakes up well before dawn. He looks at the clock and notes that he has at least 3 hours left to sleep before he needs to be up. His eyes move to the figure standing at the window looking out.

“Come back to bed.”

Steve turns and looks apologetically at the god. “I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“You didn’t. But you should try to get some rest while you can.”

Turning back to the window, Steve responds, “I can’t sleep. I’ll go in the living room so I don’t keep you up.” He takes a few steps towards the bedroom door, but stops when Loki is suddenly in front of him, blocking his path.

“Come back to bed,” the god repeats.

“I can’t sleep,” Steve answers.

Loki takes his hand and pulls him back to the bed, “then don’t.” He pulls Steve into a kiss, one hand coming up to grip the hair at the nape of his neck, while the other moves down to push the blondes boxer down off his hips. “There will be much for you to do over the next few days. You will lead us, you will coordinate our teams, you will fight against those who hurt you. But for now, let me take care of you.”

Steve nods his head and allows himself to surrender to the familiar feeling of the god’s touch. Loki removes his sleep pants and guides Steve to lay down on the bed, face down. Straddling the soldiers thighs, Loki begins to run his hands along the muscles of Steve’s back. He kneads the muscles and works to ease any tension the blonde may have. The soft groans, muffled by the pillow, let him know Steve is enjoying his ministrations.

Leaning forward Loki places a kiss on Steve’s shoulder, then reaches over to pull a bottle of lube from the night stand drawer. Steve’s eyes follow the movement of Loki’s arm. He can feel when he shifts down the bed further. He hears the click of the bottle being opened and then waits for the god’s touch. There is a nervous flutter in his stomach for just a moment. When Loki moves forward and kisses the small of his back he allows himself to relax and barely moves when he feels the first finger
circle his hole before breaching him gently. He cannot help the low moan that escapes his mouth.

Loki raises his head just enough to tell his lover, “let me take care of you.” He tries to keep his movements slow and gentle despite the growing ache in his loins. Even though he and Steve have been intimate in the last few days, they have yet to make love and he wants desperately to show the blonde just how he feels, to connect on that level again.

When he feels the soldier is ready, he urges Steve to turn on his back. Loki wants to look into those blue eyes. The look of complete openness and vulnerability on Steve’s face is enough to take Loki’s breath away. He leans down and presses a kiss to soft lips before pulling back and positioning himself between Steve’s legs. He lines himself up and slowly pushes in, never breaking eye contact.

Steve’s hands grip Loki’s shoulders as he brings his legs up and wraps them around the gods slim hips. His mouth drops open and Loki knows he has found the blondes prostrate. He keeps his movements slow and controlled as he works to bring Steve the greatest pleasure. He only quickens his pace when the blonde plunges both hands into hair and pulls him down for a kiss. Wrapping his legs tighter around Loki, Steve takes himself in hand and begins to stroke along his length in concert with the gods movements. When Loki glides across that spot deep inside him, Steve cannot hold back the moan that accompanies his release.

Watching the sheer bliss on his lovers face is all that it takes to send Loki over the edge as well. Reluctantly Steve loosens his legs from around Loki and allows the god to withdraw. He gets up quickly and retrieves a wash cloth from the bathroom where he cleans them both up before climbing back into bed and wrapping his body around the Captain.

Steve closes his eyes, body fully relaxed and it doesn’t take long for his breathing to even out as he falls asleep. Loki looks at the clock and decides to take advantage and try to get a little more sleep himself.

The flight is long and the group spends their time reviewing their plans and intel. Once the Captain is satisfied that they all know the plan, he moves to sit in the back of the plane by himself. He watches Loki, deep in conversation with T’Challa and Thor. Bucky and Natasha are comparing histories, Sam and Scott are chatting amiably while Fury is in the cockpit. Steve knows once they land they will have to unload their gear and get set up in their temporary base of operations, provided by yet another of Fury’s contacts. He leans his head back and closes his eyes, going over the plan one more time.

Chapter End Notes

We are nearing the end of this story, relatively. I anticipate at least 5 more chapters, maybe as many as 10 as I pull all the strings together. I hope you are enjoying reading it as much as I enjoy writing it.
Battle Symphony
Linkin Park

I got a long way to go
And a long memory
I've been searching for an answer
Always just out of reach
Blood on the floor
Sirens repeat
I've been searching for the courage
To face my enemies
When they turn down the lights
I hear my battle symphony
All the world in front of me
If my armor breaks
I'll fuse it back together
Battle symphony
Please just don't give up on me
And my eyes are wide awake
For my battle symphony
For my battle symphony
They say that I don't belong
Say that I should retreat
That I'm marching to the rhythm
Of a lonesome defeat
But the sound of your voice
Puts the pain in reverse
No surrender, no illusions
And for better or worse
When they turn down the lights
I hear my battle symphony
All the world in front of me
If my armor breaks
I'll fuse it back together
Battle symphony
Please just don't give up on me
And my eyes are wide awake
If I fall, get knocked down
Pick myself up off the ground
If I fall, get knocked down
Pick myself up off the ground
When they turn down the lights
I hear my battle symphony
All the world in front of me
If my armor breaks
Day 240

Steve, Bucky and Loki are heading to the main base to do some last minute recon. Natasha, Sam and Thor have gone to the Northern base while Fury, Scott and T’Challa are at the Southern base.

“I think we’ve got what we need here Cap,” Natasha says over her comm. The layout of the Northern base matches the intel she has and the patrolling pattern of the guards is easily predicted.

“Got it. Head on back,” Steve acknowledges. “Fury, how are you looking?”

“Couple of discrepancies with our map. Scott’s gonna go take a look,” Fury tells him as Scott activates his suit and shrinks down.

“Good idea. Give me an update with what you find.”

Bucky stops the car he is driving about 2 miles out from the main base. Steve and Loki both get out of the car and the three of them set out on foot towards the base.

Steve takes point, moving at a crouch, keeping behind cover as much as possible. He holds a hand up to stop Loki and Bucky before he lowers himself to his belly and pulls out his binoculars. The two men carefully approach the Captain and lower to the ground to also take a look at the base.

“Seems pretty quiet,” Steve observes.

Bucky just grunts in response while Loki stays quiet. The three men watch the guard movements for a time until a large black sedan drives up, followed closely by two cargo trucks. The blonde furrows his brows and shifts on the ground. Bucky recognizes the movement for what it is and knows Steve is feeling nervous about what he is seeing.

Bucky looks at Loki, “do you think you can get inside without being seen? Get an idea of what’s in those trucks?”

With a quick glance to Steve he replies, “I can.”

The Captain doesn’t look up, “do it, but just look around, don’t let them see you and don’t do anything else,” he orders.

Loki nods his head then creeps backwards before standing and disappearing.

“Pretty neat trick,” Bucky comments, causing Steve to grin.

They wait and continue to watch the guards.

“Cap, we’re all good here,” Fury’s voice comes in the soldiers ear. “The base has undergone some minor changes. Looks like they are using it for equipment storage.
“Good. We’ll see you back at base as soon as we are done here. Get prepped, we’ll hit them at first light tomorrow.”

“You got it,” Fury responds before breaking contact.

Another 30 minutes go by and Loki has yet to reappear, by this time Steve is getting antsy, continuously looking at his watch. “Relax,” Bucky tells him. “He’s fine. You were never this nervous about me,” he teases.

“I know. It’s just different with him.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. But you need to keep it together. He can handle himself. Heck, he could probably take this entire base out all by himself. Matter of fact, I’m not sure why you and I are even here,” Bucky adds with a grin.

Steve opens his mouth to respond just as Loki appears. “The one truck has people in it. Captives, looks like. The other has equipment. The car had a man, looked important. His name was Zemo. From what I could hear, he is planning on using the captives to try and create more Winter Soldiers. The equipment will be installed by tomorrow night and then they will start processing them.”

Loki glances at Bucky quickly before turning his attention back to Steve.

“Lets head out. I want to go over everything with the team one last time,” Steve tells them and he moves to make the hike back to their car.

Bucky hangs back just a moment, placing a hand on Loki’s arm. “What aren’t you telling him?”

“Cryo pods, eight of them. Already in use.”

Bucky nods his head and they both move to follow the Captain.

Day 241

Its early, still dark outside when the Captain approaches the fence line to the compound. Loki is already on the inside, while Bucky hangs back, sniper rifle at the ready. Steve rolls his shoulders and runs for the fence, leaping up to grab the top and vaulting himself over. He makes his way along the perimeter of the building until he meets up with Loki at a designated spot. The two of them move to the southern most guard tower where the god disappears and reappears within the confines of the tower. He quickly knocks out and secures the two guards before returning to Steve on the ground. They work their way around the fence line taking out the guards in this manner. At the last one a guard comes out from a side entrance to the main building, surprising Steve. The guard brings up his comm and is about to sound the alarm when he drops to the ground, a red stain spreading across his chest.

“Thanks Buck,” Steve whispers.

“Anytime pal. I’m gonna head in,” Bucky responds as he discards the rifle in a bush and checks his handgun.

Natasha grunts when she hits the ground, her legs wrapped around the neck of the unlucky bastard who tried to stop her. She gets up, dusting herself off and goes back to placing her charges around
the room. When she is done, she moves on to the next room. “Ready here,” she says in to her comm.


“Aye. I have secured all the guards and staff. I am ready to bring the lightning.” When he see’s Sam coming out of the building dragging another unconscious guard, followed by Natasha, the god raises Mjolnir and calls down the lighting, directing it to strike the door. The lightning strikes the charge Natasha placed and sets off a chain reaction. Within minutes the entire building is in flames.

Loki catches Steve’s shield on the ricochet. He leaps on top of the moving box truck and brings the edge of the shield down to break through the hood and crack open the engine. Bucky is there in an instant, pulling the would be escapee out of the cab. The god turns and throws the shield back to Steve, who catches it easily, just before swinging his arm and using it to knock two more guards to the ground.

T’Challa drops to the ground, the impact from the bullet knocking him off his feet. Climbing back to his feet, he looks down at his stomach, knowing there will be bruising under his suit. Before he can move against his assailant, Fury rises up from behind a desk and shoots the man in the face.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it,” Fury responds. He checks the hallway and when he see’s it is clear, he gestures for T’Challa to go forward. They have worked through most of the facility this way while Scott ensures all the equipment is destroyed.

“I found the captives. Loki can you look for any files related to them. See if you can find any information or identities for them,” Steve requests.

Loki is already standing at a computer station looking for other files and so he can easily do this task. Within moments he has a list of names and country of origin. As he scans the list his eyes widen in surprise. “According to this, there should be 12 of them.”

“There are. I’m going to try and get them moving so we can get them out of here.”

“Ask if one of them is named Marcus.”

Steve thinks that is an oddly specific thing to ask, but he does it anyway. It only takes a moment before he responds. “How did you know?”

Merely seeking confirmation. “They are from the facility in Texas,” Loki tells him.

Steve swears to himself as he looks over the prisoners. These people were slated to be part of the Winter Soldier program. He begins to usher them out and back towards the cargo area where the one undamaged box truck sits. He puts Marcus in charge and heads back into the main building to find Bucky.

Loki has continued his search but he can tell he is going to have to go to the main frame computer to access the files he is looking for. The computer it located in the main lab where the cryo pods are stored and so he heads that way knowing Bucky will be there soon if he isn’t already.
Loki arrives there first and immediately accesses the main frame. He begins a search for any files related to the Winter Soldier program and to Bucky specifically. Hearing a noise, he looks at the door and see’s Bucky enter the room. The soldier immediately goes to the cryo pods lined up against the wall. The look on his face is unreadable as he stands there. Bucky moves to the first tank and is about to put a bullet through it when he glances to the side and see’s it. A chair, but not just any chair. The one they used on him. The one they strapped him down to as they tore apart his mind, over and over again. The rage is instant and uncontrollable and in a heartbeat he is destroying it. Leaving only broken pieces and splintered wood.

Loki watches for a moment before turning back to the computer terminal. He can see the search will take a few more minutes and so he moves to the line of pods and sends a pulse of magic into the controls of the last one, causing it to shut down. The woman inside will not survive the rapid thawing and so in an act of mercy, he quickly opens the tank, pulls out a dagger and stabs her through the heart.

The hissing of the pod opening catches Bucky’s attention and he begins to look over the controls of the pod nearest to him.

“What are you doing?” Both men look up to see Steve standing on a cat walk above them. Bucky turns back to the pod he was working on, pulls a gun and shoots through the glass into the head of the man inside. “Bucky! Wait!” the blonde yells as he looks frantically for the stairs that lead down to their level.

He hears 3 more shots in quick succession. The stairs are at the far end of the room and so he decides to take a short cut and drops over the railing to land on the concrete below. The impact jars his legs and it takes him a moment to stand. He hears 3 more shots and the hissing of another tank opening. He straightens and runs to Bucky’s side, but can see he is already too late.

Loki pulls his dagger out the chest of the man in the last pod. The look of disgust on Steve’s face when he turns back around startles him. “How could you do that?” the blonde asks.

“It was necessary,” Loki responds as he starts to walk past Steve to the computer terminal, not wanting to see the look on his lovers face.

“Necessary!” Steve shouts as he grabs the god by the arm and stops him. “How can you say that? You killed those people.”

“Steve, leave him alone,” Bucky says.

“How can I? He-“

“He did no more than I did. So why aren’t you mad at me too?” Bucky asks.

Steve furrows his brow as he considers Bucky’s words. “There had to be a better way.”

Loki looks at his lovers face, “there wasn’t. This was a mercy.”

Flinching back Steve hisses, “a mercy? And what if it had been Bucky in there? What then? Would it have been a mercy to kill him?”

Before Loki can respond Bucky steps up and places his metal hand on Steve’s shoulder, “yes it would have been. I would have been better off.”

Steve looks stricken at this. “How can you say that? You would be better off dead?”
“I’m not…… Not now, but back then, before, yeah it would have been better. These poor souls, they wouldn’t have anyone to help unscramble their brains like I did.”

Loki steps away from the two soldiers and walks to the computer terminal. He starts to look over the list of files just as Steve comes up behind him. “What are you doing now?” Steve asks, the accusation in his tone clear. The blonde leans in the look at the screen and see’s Bucky’s name on the screen. “What are you doing?” he demands.

"Longing….."

All three men jerk their heads around towards the voice coming out of the overhead speaker.

“Rusted…..”

Bucky’s eyes narrow.

“Seventeen…”

Steve pulls his shield off his back.

“Daybreak…..”

Loki looks at Bucky, who is standing transfixed.

“Furnace…”

Bucky’s jaw twitches as his hands clench in to fists.

“Nine…..”

Loki reaches out and touches Bucky’s shoulder. The soldier doesn’t look up or react in any way.

“Benign…”

Steve pulls his arm back and hurls his shield at a section of mirrored glass that shatters on impact. There is a disheveled man with brown hair standing there next to an intercom panel.

The next word is heard from the man’s own voice and not through the intercom, “homecoming…..”

Loki lunges forward and grabs Bucky. He wraps him tightly in his arms and then disappears. He reappears moments later to see Steve punching the brown haired man in the face.

“Steve,” Loki calls trying to get the blonde’s attention. “Steve we need to get Bucky out of here.”

The super soldier looks up at the god, “what happened? Where’s Bucky?” he adds when he realizes his friend is gone.

“He’s fine. Safe for now in one of the holding cells, but we need to finish this up so we can get him out of here.”

Nodding, the blonde grabs his shield and places it back on its harness, but not before reading the name on the mans ID badge, “Helmut Zemo”.

“I’m going to go get Natasha and I’ll have Thor fly here. They can finish up while we take care of Bucky.”
There is no response from Steve who has turned his attention back to the computer terminal. He clicks on the first file with Bucky’s name on it. Before the file can load, Loki reaches over and deletes everything.
Chapter 50

Chapter Summary

Steve and Loki try to find a way to help Bucky and Steve is still struggling with trust issues and his conflicting emotions.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 50

Better Man
Sixx A.M.

Where is the blood I gave you?
Where is the sacrifice I made?
What the hell happened to me?
When did I turn so damn afraid?
I fly on crippled wings
But I will take your bitterness away
Where is the blood I gave you?
Where is the sacrifice I made?
I wanna let you know
These scars are here forever
Heaven help me be a better man
I really hope it shows
I'm mighty cracked and broken
Heaven help me be a better man
I try to swallow hard now
'cause I can't see beyond the blur
But I could make a new vow
Or die for you if you'd prefer
Did I become so vacant?
Have I just made this all a mess?
I know you've lost your patience
I'll beg forgiveness if there's half a chance
Just half a chance
I wanna let you know
These scars are here forever
Heaven help me be a better man
I really hope it shows
I'm mighty cracked and broken
Heaven help me be a better man
Sometimes my best isn't good enough
But I do what I can trying to be a better man
Give me a second chance, I'm gonna make it last
I'll do the best I can trying to be a better man
I wanna let you know
These scars are here forever
Heaven help me be a better man
I really hope it shows
I'm mighty cracked and broken
Heaven help me be a better man
Sometimes my best isn't good enough
But I do what I can trying to be a better man
Give me a second chance, I'm gonna make it last
I'll do the best I can trying to be a better man.
For you
For you
For me

Day 242

Loki leans forward in his chair, looking into Bucky’s eyes. There is still no movement, no flicker of recognition. With a sigh, he sits back in his chair and pinches the bridge of his nose. He drops his hand when Steve walks in to the living room from his bedroom.

“Any change?” he asks sharply.

Inwardly Loki cringes. Since bringing Bucky back in a near catatonic state the day before, Steve has barely spoken to him and when he does, it is only to ask after his friend’s condition.

“There has been no change.” Loki can see the anguish on the blondes face and his heart aches. “I spoke to Thor. Fury brought in some help to finish cleaning up the cryo site and to take any captives. All of the equipment has been destroyed along with any records.”

That causes Steve to glare. “You mean the records you destroyed? The ones that could have helped us fix this?” he gestures wildly to Bucky.

“Look, Steve, I know you’re upset—” Loki begins.

“Upset? That doesn’t even begin to cover it. You killed those people and then you destroyed any chance we have of getting Bucky back.”

“There wasn’t a way to fix this in those records.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I already read them! Bucky had a copy. He asked me to destroy them when he knew what was in there.” Loki gestures to the dark haired soldier.

Steve is almost afraid to ask. “What did the files say?”

“That’s not for me to tell. You will need to ask Bucky for that information.”

“Convenient that I can’t,” Steve snarls.

Loki slams his hand down on the table beside him. “Enough! I get that you don’t trust me. I get that,
but Bucky did. He asked me to do this as his friend. Just as he asked me not to tell you.”

“And you just agreed to it?” Steve asks pleadingly.

“You would have done the same thing,” the god answers softly as he glances back to Bucky’s still form.

Day 243

Loki appears in the living room and stands quietly watching Steve for a few moments. The anguish on the blondes face is all too easy to see. Clearing his throat, Loki moves to the chair and sits down.

“My mother said I can bring him to Asgard. Let the healers try to awaken him.”

Steve looks up as he considers the offer. He still isn't sure how he feels about what Loki did. He has so many questions that only Bucky can answer.

“What will they do to him?” the blonde finally asks.

“A variation of what was done to me. When I …. To help me.”

Steve gets up and paces around the room. “Is it safe?”

Loki considers his answer carefully as he moves to stand beside the Captain, “it is not without risk. But given the alternative, I think it is worth it.” The god places a hand gently on Steve’s shoulder, hoping the blonde will allow it.

The soldier gives a small nod, “when can we go?”

Relieved that Steve has not rebuked his touch, he withdraws his hand, “as soon as you are ready.”

It is only Loki’s steadying hands that keep Steve from stumbling with Bucky in his arms when the bifrost places them within Heimdall’s observatory.

“The Queen awaits with a carriage,” the imposing gatekeeper tells Loki with a gesture towards the exit.

The ride to the palace is made in silence even though the Queen is full of questions for the blonde man sitting across from her. When she opens herself up, she can feel the emotions rolling off him. Concern and confusion foremost among them. This is not the way she wanted to meet her son’s lover, but the thought of not trying to help their friend never crossed her mind.

Steve carries Bucky into the healers chambers and lays him on the stone table. Immediately he is ushered out of the way as the Queen and her team of healers surround the prone man. An image shimmers above Bucky that Steve cannot decipher, but knows must be showing the Asgardians information on his friend’s condition. When he steps forward to get a closer look, the Queen’s eyes flick up to him and then to her son. “This is going to take a while. Loki, why don’t you take the Captain to the dining hall and then to your chambers to rest.”

“If it’s all the same to you, ma’am, I would prefer to stay here,” Steve answers.
“You look like you are about to drop from exhaustion. And if you do, our attention will be diverted from your friend. You don’t want that now do you?” The Queen chides causing a light blush to spread across his face.

“No ma’am.”

She casts a meaningful look to her son and then turns her attention back to Bucky, effectively dismissing the other two men from the room.

“He is in good hands," the god tells him.

"That's not the point Loki. I should be in here with him."

"Can you not simply trust me on this?"

Steve has to stifle the harsh laugh that tries to bubble up from his chest. "Trust you? That's what it all comes back to isn’t it. Can I trust you."

Loki physically flinches away from the Captain. He knows Steve is scared for his friend and is lashing out, but it still hurts.

Frigga raises her head up and looks at her son briefly, eyes shifting to the door. Loki immediately exits the room and closes the door behind himself.

“Captain Rogers, a word, if you please,” she says stepping away from the healers to the side of the room.

Steve can tell by the tone of the Queens voice that even though it was phrased as a request, her words are an order, plain and simple.

“You are allowing your issues with my son to cloud your judgment regarding your friends care. I was given to believe that you were more intelligent than that.” She pauses, waiting for a response that does not come. “Was I wrong?” She prompts.

“No ma’am,” the blonde responds, thoroughly chastised.

“Good. Loki will escort you to the dining hall and then you will rest while we finish our work here,” she instructs sternly.

“Yes ma’am.”

Softer she adds, “and Steve, I know you have reason to question Loki, but have faith.”

“I want to, but-“

“I know. We will talk more later. After we have seen to your friend.”

As Loki leads Steve through the ornate halls towards the dining area, he cannot help but be impressed and a little intimidated by the opulence of the palace. For the first time, he really understands that Loki is indeed a Prince. When they enter the dining hall, Loki leads him past the long rows of wooden tables to a smaller one situated at the very front. “Wait here and I will have the cooks prepare something for you.” He doesn’t wait for an answer, simply turns on his heel and exits through a side door that Steve had not noticed before.
Loki comes back moments later carrying a tray with a pitcher of water, two goblets, several pieces of fruit, some cheese and some bread. “The cooks will bring out something more substantial in a few minutes, but I know you must be hungry with as little as you have eaten.

Even though Steve was certain he was not going to be able to eat, seeing the food placed in front of him causes his belly to rumble embarrassingly loud and so he reaches for the bread and tears off a piece as Loki pours them both some water.

It doesn’t take long before Steve has devoured most of the bread and several pieces of fruit. When the cook brings out a tray of sliced meat, Steve eyes it hungrily as it is placed on the table. The cook looks to Loki and with a nod of thanks from the Prince, he leaves the men alone once again.

Loki eats a few pieces of meat and fruit while trying to avoid looking at Steve. When the blonde pushes the tray of food away and sits back in his chair, Loki sets down the piece of fruit he had been eating. “I’ll take you to a room so you can rest until the healers are ready for us.”

Furrowing his brows, Steve considers Loki’s words. Even though he is angry with Loki, he can’t help but be disappointed that the god has chosen to give him his own room instead of taking him to his personal chambers as Frigga instructed. Either way, he can feel the exhaustion overtaking him and so he pushes his chair back and stands. He follows Loki out of the dining hall, studying his gait and the long lines of his body as he goes. With the stress of the last few days, he wants nothing more than to take refuge in Loki’s arms, but he is not ready to let go of his anger despite how desperately he wants to take Frigga’s advice and have faith.

When Loki opens the door to his room, Steve follows him in and glances around. His eyes are immediately drawn to the large bed.

“Try to get some sleep. The Queen will send for you if there is any change,” Loki tells him.

They stand in awkward silence for a moment before Loki speaks again. “I’ll leave you to it then.” He turns and walks to the door, his chest tightening.

“Loki, wait,” Steve calls after him, but when the god turns, he isn’t sure how to continue. He takes a breathe to clear his mind. “He is my best friend-” he begins.

“And you have no reason to trust me,” Loki interrupts. “I understand that and for what its worth, I am sorry that I let you down again.”

“I want to trust you, but how can I, when you don’t trust me either?”

The god is thoroughly confused, “of course I trust you.”

“Then stop keeping secrets from me,” Steve pleads.

Loki ducks his head, “you ask me to betray Bucky’s trust in order to gain yours. This I cannot do.”

On some level Steve understands what Loki is telling him, but he cannot help the whirl of emotions going through his head and his heart.

Moving back to the door, the god steps out and closes it behind himself without another word.

Loki waits in the hall for an hour to be sure Steve has finally fallen asleep, then heads directly back to the healing chambers.
Chapter End Notes

I finally got to see Ragnarok. No spoilers here, but Loki.....I want to go see it again, just for him.
Chapter 51

Chapter Summary

Steve is still angry and Bucky and Frigga have both had enough of his shit.

Chapter 51

What About Us
P!nk

We are searchlights, we can see in the dark
We are rockets, pointed up at the stars
We are billions of beautiful hearts
And you sold us down the river too far
What about us?
What about all the times you said you had the answers?
What about us?
What about all the broken happy ever afters?
What about us?
What about all the plans that ended in disaster?
What about love? What about trust?
What about us?
We are problems that want to be solved
We are children that need to be loved
We were willin', we came when you called
But man, you fooled us, enough is enough, oh
What about us?
What about all the times you said you had the answers?
What about us?
What about all the broken happy ever afters?
Oh, what about us?
What about all the plans that ended in disaster?
Oh, what about love? What about trust?
What about us?
Sticks and stones, they may break these bones
But then I'll be ready, are you ready?
It's the start of us, waking up come on
Are you ready? I'll be ready
I don't want control, I want to let go
Are you ready? I'll be ready
'Cause now it's time to let them know
We are ready, what about us?
What about us?
What about all the times you said you had the answers?
So what about us?
What about all the broken happy ever afters?
Oh, what about us?
What about all the plans that ended in disaster?
Oh, what about love? What about trust?
What about us?

Day 244

It is just past midnight when Loki, Frigga and the team of healers are ready to attempt to wake Bucky. Frigga stands beside the table and places her hand on Bucky’s forehead. She says a brief incantation and then steps back.

The soldier’s eyes fly open and he bolts up from the table, fists held up defensively in front of his body. His eyes dart around looking for a weapon. He lunges towards a shelf and grabs a metal blade, pulls a young female healer against his body and holds the blade to her neck.

Loki steps into the soldier’s field of vision, hands held out to his sides. “Calm yourself James Buchanan Barnes,” the god commands.

The soldier’s body relaxes, his hand dropping to his side. The young healer darts to the other side of the room as Loki steps forward and places his hand on Bucky’s forehead. The god gives Bucky a suggestion to sleep and then catches his body just before he hits the floor.

Frigga excuses the healers so she and Loki can continue working on their own. The two barely speak as they work. When they woke Bucky the first time, they felt reasonably sure they had been successful, but the soldier’s reaction proved them to be wrong. After several more hours it becomes apparent that they are not going to be able to completely remove the triggers from the soldier’s subconscious and so they decide to try something else. There will be a new trigger that will hopefully countermand the Winter Soldier programming if and when it is initiated.

Frigga uses her magic to bind Bucky as Loki touches his forehead and wakes him. This time the soldier only moves slightly, just enough to tell he is being restrained. Loki leans in to Bucky’s field of vision and then begins to speak.

"Longing, rusted, seventeen, daybreak….”

The god can see the change come over Bucky as he says the last of the trigger words. He glances to his mother and she can see the tension written on his face. She knows he is unsettled with using the trigger words on his friend, but they both know this is the best solution available.

After giving Bucky some basic instructions to ensure he is fully ensconced in the Winter Soldier programming, Loki leaves to go get Steve.

Loki knocks lightly on the door to Steve’s chambers. The blonde opens it within seconds having been up and pacing the room in his nervousness.

“Is he….. did the healers fix him?” he asks. The hope in his voice, almost breaking Loki’s heart.

“We did what we could,” is all the god responds as he steps back from the door so Steve can follow him out.
They walk in silence while the Captain’s mind races trying to put meaning behind Loki’s words. *We did what we could. What does that mean?*

It doesn’t take long before they arrive at the ornately carved doors of the healers chambers. Steve looks at the god before turning to go in to his friend. Loki reaches out and grabs his arm holding him back. “Wait. You need to be prepared. Things did not go quite as planned.”

“What do you mean?”

“We were unable to remove the trigger from his subconscious.”

Steve looks heartbroken, “you were supposed to fix him.”

“We tried Steve, to do more would have irreparably harmed him.”

“So that’s it? I’ve lost him again?”

Steve looks utterly devastated and Loki wants nothing more than to pull him into his embrace, but he resists, knowing the only thing that will ease the Captains pain is to see Bucky for himself. With a touch, the doors to the healing chambers part and Loki pushes one of the heavy slabs open for Steve to enter.

Bucky is on the same stone table as before, only this time he is sitting up staring straight ahead at the wall. Steve freezes when he see’s his friend and it is only Loki’s hand on the small of his back pushing him forward, that makes him move.

The change in Bucky’s posture is almost immediate when Steve steps in front of him. “Steve?”

Steve rushes forward and pulls Bucky into a tight hug, a sob escaping his throat.

“Hey, Steve, whats wrong?” Bucky asks as he pulls back from his friend.

The blonde looks completely perplexed as both men shift to look at Loki for explanation. He steps closer to the table as he observes Bucky’s mannerisms, wanting to reassure himself that the man is indeed back to himself. He looks back to Steve as he begins to talk. “As I said, we were unable to remove the triggers,” he shifts his gaze to Bucky before continuing, “we had to implant a new trigger to countermand the Winter Soldier programming.”

Loki is not prepared for the anger that he can feel coming off of Steve, ”you were supposed to fix him, not add more programming,” he hisses.

“There isn’t anything physically wrong and so there is only so much we can do.”

“But he... he's...." Steve chokes out looking between Loki and his friend.

"Stevie, hey its ok if this is as good as it gets. It's not so bad. Loki tried-" 

Steve cuts him off before Bucky can finish, “Loki planted more shit in your head! Who knows what he did. He killed the others, destroyed the Hydra files and now this.”

"Steve stop. That was my choice. I asked him to do it."

Steve strides over to stand in front of the god. Loki takes an involuntary step back but lifts his head to stare directly into those angry blue eyes.

"You had no right-" Steve begins.
"He has every right! I asked him to do it. I begged him to! So don’t lay this on him. He didn’t do anything wrong."

"He’s done plenty wrong."

“Then so have I! So stop holding him to a different standard than you hold me! I’ve seen his mind. You learn a lot about a guy when he is rattling around in your head. He knows what it’s like to be torn apart bit by bit until you completely lose yourself. What it feels like to have your will scraped away leaving you raw and broken until you gratefully accept whatever is being given to you, even if it is beyond your worst nightmares. He knows exactly what was done to me, just like he knows what was being done to the other Winter Soldiers. So you don’t have the right to judge him.”

Loki looks stricken where he stands, like he wants to bolt out the door, instead he simply vanishes.

Bucky turns to Steve, the frustration written clearly on his face, “you wanna know what he put in my head?”

Steve doesn’t answer, just purses his lips and narrows his eyes.

“It was you, Steve. You are the new trigger. The one that brings me back from the programming. I just have to see you.”

“Captain Rogers,” Frigga calls quietly from the corner of the room where she has been watching the drama unfold. Both men startle at her voice, neither one realizing she was even there until she spoke. “I believe it is time for us to have that talk.”

She turns to Bucky, “one of the healers will escort you to a room near Loki’s so you can rest.” She tells him, gesturing to the door. Bucky recognizes an order when it is given and so he moves past Steve, squeezing his shoulder on the way out.

The Queen turns back to her son’s lover and sweeps her arm towards a side door, “come with me.”

He follows her into a smaller room furnished simply with two comfortable looking chairs, with a small table between. She wastes no time and begins speaking as soon as they are seated. “How much did Loki tell you about his past?”

“He uh…. told me some,” Steve hedges, not sure how much detail Frigga knows of what Elgin did to Loki.

“Right so you know the kind of trauma he has been through.”

“With Elgin, yes.”

The Queen shakes her head, “beyond that. What that……person did to my son was……,” she pauses trying to find the right words. “I am not sorry for what Loki did to him and his friends. Loki came to me and asked for my help to ease the memories from that day. He knew that he would lose you if he did nothing and above all else, he does not want that.”

Steve ducks his head.

“As bad as what Elgin did is, there were other….events. Things that affect how Loki lives his life, things that shape the man that he is. He is a Prince of Asgard and was raised as such. He is also quite possibly the most powerful sorcerer in the nine realms. He is extremely intelligent and has a penchant for mischief that often leads him into trouble.” Frigga smiles at this. “I’m sure you have witnessed first hand his skills with his blades. And yet none of this was quite enough to overcome the
devastation he felt when he found out his true heritage.

“Odin and I, we lied to him, his entire life. Hid from him his lineage all while teaching him to hate his own people. We failed him and then we lost him to the void. He rarely talks about that time, but I have seen some of it, in visions. When he asked me to help him with his other memories, I eased some of those as well, but they will always be a part of him. Just as yours will always be a part of you.” Frigga looks into the eyes of her son’s chosen, taking measure of the man before her.

“My son is a good man, Steve. He is a complicated man, but he is not a perfect man. The same as you.”

Steve nods his head, unable to speak.

“If you choose to pursue this relationship with Loki, you must be able to accept every aspect of him. Can you do that?”

“I…” Steve stops to clear his throat, “I want to. I love him. I………,” Steve doesn’t know what else to say. “I love him,” he repeats, “but I don’t know what to do.”

The Queen smiles brightly as she stands. Steve stands as well and is immediately pulled into a tight embrace. “That is simple, you must have faith. When all hope is lost, when all others doubt, you must have faith.”

Steve walks back to his room as he replays his conversation with the Queen in his head. He must have faith. It is so simple, but not so easy. He thinks about how Bucky chastised him more than once for judging Loki harsher than himself. By the time he reaches his room he knows he needs to go to Loki and he needs to beg him for forgiveness. He will be a better man, the man Loki deserves, the man Loki needs him to be.

He opens the door and walks into his room, closing the door behind himself. Immediately the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end and his senses are on high alert. He dives to the side just a moment before a blow is landed on the wooden door where his head had just been. One glance is enough to know the blow was not meant to kill. This person means to take him alive. His eyes search the room for a weapon as they adjust to the dark. His shield is out of reach and so he grabs a decorative sword and shield from their mount on the wall. He twirls his wrist testing the balance of the sword then he lunges forward in a feint before he twists and smashes the shield against the side of his assailants head. The resulting sound is satisfying until the blonde looks at the shield and sees the dent and spidery cracks through the metal. Clearly this person is not human and it will take more to defeat him. He figures he has one more shot with the shield before it breaks completely.

His attacker turns and launches himself at Steve. The Captain raises the sword and thrusts it forward into the gut of the other man. The soldier is surprised when he grips the protruding end of the blade, hands glowing slightly. The soldier cannot hold back the sound that escapes his throat as he watches the blade crumble and fall to the floor. Backing away, Steve holds the shield in front of himself knowing it will offer little protection.

The man’s mouth opens in an approximation of a grin showing sharp angled teeth, "such fierceness from a mortal. Thanos’ spy said nothing of this. No wonder the godling is so attached to you. But tell me mortal, would you be willing to die for such a monster?” He lifts his hands, fingers splayed as he invades Steve’s mind. The pain that lances through Steve causes him to double over. He moves forward to grab the Captain so he can return the mortal to his master. Just as his hands land on the blondes arms Steve pushes up, slamming the shield, which splinters apart, into his attackers chest,
causing him to release his grip. Steve grabs a vase from the table next to him and slams it into his assailants head where it shatters.

It momentarily stuns the man, but he recovers quickly and lunges forward, “Enough! I would kill you and end this, but Thanos wants you alive.” He hits Steve with the entire weight of his body sending them both back and into a table that breaks under the impact. He moves his hand up and places it on the side of Steve’s head. The soldier has just a moment to register the blinding pain before he blackouts.
I'll die if I had
Inside me there's a fire
That burns, woah
My life begins and
Ends without the fate
That we learned, woah
Save me from the darkest places
Save me from myself
I'm a loaded gun
An only son
But I'm nobody's hero
I've come undone
I'm on the run
Yeah, I'm nobody's hero
Nobody's hero
To heal, your scars
I will give you everything I can, whoa
This war of hearts
We will rise again and take a stand, whoa
I can't lead you to salvation
I am just a man
I'm a loaded gun
An only son
But I'm nobody's hero
I've come undone
I'm on the run
Yeah, I'm nobody's hero
Nobody's hero
This moment is close?
Guess you're happy to exist
We feel the loss
Of the lives that left to rest
I'm a loaded gun
An only son
But I'm nobody's hero
I've come undone
I'm on the run
Yeah, I'm nobody's hero
Nobody's hero
Bucky is pounding and yelling at Loki's door, "Loki! Open up! It's Steve!"

The god jerks open the door, "stop yelling," he hisses pulling the other man into his room and shutting the door. "What's going on?"

"Steve’s gone. I went to talk to him this morning and he's gone. His room is trashed, looks like he didn't go willingly."

For just a moment Bucky can see the flash of fear that comes over the god's features before he quickly controls himself and heads for the door in long strides.

Bucky follows behind and stands back as Loki throws open the door to Steve’s room. He takes in the scene, spotting the Captain’s shield by the bed. Walking over, he picks it up as a golden light travels over his body and he is dressed in black leathers. In place of his long coat is the brown leather harness that Steve usually wears. Loki places the shield on his back and in an instant disappears.

"Shit!" Bucky curses as he runs out into the hallway. He grabs the first person he finds, "Thor, where is Thor?"

"I don't know," the startled servant stammers.

"Find him, now! It's an emergency."

The servant dips his head in acknowledgement, "follow me."

He begins to lead Bucky to the throne room assuming that is the most likely place to find the Prince. Before they reach their destination, Thor himself comes striding around the opposite corner.

Bucky breaks into a run to close the distance, "Steve was taken and Loki took off!"

The blonde frowns, "that does not bode well. I have just been informed that there has been a breach in Odin’s vault. Come with me." The Thunder god leads Bucky down a hallway towards the throne room. They take a set of stairs just to the left of the entrance and head down to the vault.

Bucky glances around, not sure what he should be looking for, but Thor moves directly to an empty raised dais. He slams his fist down, splintering the base.

“What was it?” Bucky asks, indicating the empty place.

“Loki’s scepter.”

"What do we do?"

"Come, we must speak to the Queen."

Queen Frigga, Bucky and Thor are back in Steve’s room surveying the damage. The Queen picks her way through the mess trying to pick up any traces of residual magic, for she has no doubt who ever Steve’s assailant was, they are a magic user.

Her eyes land on the shards of a broken vase laying on the ground. She bends down to examine the pieces in closer detail until she finds what she needs. The small red splatters are just enough.

"Thor we must gather a team. Can you call your Avengers to Asgard?"
"Yes, of course, I will go to Heimdall now, but first tell me what it is you sense."

"Thanos."

That single name is enough to shock the god, "he was here? In the palace?"

"Not him, but his servant. I can feel his taint, his evil. It pulses within the blood of the Other."

Bucky goes pale when he hears this. He knows exactly what the Other did to Loki at Thanos' will. Knowing that he now has Steve makes him sick with worry. Frigga sees his reaction and places a hand on his arm, "Thor, go to Heimdall. Bucky and I shall gather Sif and the warriors three. Meet us in my chambers and we will make plans to get Loki and Steve back."

"What of the King? Will he not help?" Bucky asks.

"He must remain on Asgard. We cannot risk Thanos or anyone else using our moment of distraction to bring harm here, but he will send warriors to aid us," she says with absolute certainty.

"Heimdall did you not see when the Captain was taken?" Thor asks hoping the gatekeeper can give him something to help them find Steve and his brother.

Heimdall lowers his gaze away from the prince, "no I did not. My attentions were elsewhere. I am sorry my Prince."

Frowning, Thor looks closely at his old friend, something bothering him about Heimdall’s answer.

Thor paces impatiently in the main living area of Stark Tower while Bruce works on gathering up equipment he thinks they may need. Finally Jarvis announces that a helicopter has landed on the roof of the tower carrying Clint and Natasha. T’Challa is still in New York, meeting with Nick Fury and so he will be arriving at the tower shortly. Once Tony returns with Ant Man, they will be ready to go.

The group gathers in Frigga’s sitting room after having used the bifrost to get to Asgard. Tony wishes he had been able to take more readings on the short trip to the palace, but Thor made it very clear this was some sort of emergency and they needed to hurry.

Thor decides to skip the introductions, “Steve has been taken.”

Tony narrows his eyes at the blonde god, but wisely holds his tongue. Scott lets out a small gasp, Bruce frowns as he shifts in his seat, while Clint and Natasha both keep their expressions neutral. Sif and the warriors three stand back against a wall, wisely staying out of the Midgardians affairs until called upon. T’Challa is the only one to speak. “You were wise to bring us here. Tell me, where is Loki? Surely he should be here for this?”

The look on Thor’s face tells the King the news is not good. “He is missing. And so is the scepter.”

“I knew it!” Clint shouts as he jumps to his feet.

Tony flops back against his seat shaking his head in disbelief. “You brought us here for Steve and Loki?”
The Queen frowns, but says nothing, choosing to let Thor handle his friends.

“Of course I did. We need to find them and bring them back.”

“Why should we? I mean, ok, maybe Steve, but screw Loki,” Clint snaps.

Thor snaps his head around to look directly at the archer, “I would advise you to take care with your words Barton.”

Natasha gently places a hand on Clint’s knee and urges him to sit back down. He does so reluctantly.

There is a slight knock on the door just before it swings open, revealing Bucky standing on the other side. He enters the room, not hearing the sound of Tony’s repulsor glove winding up until Thor has the Iron man pulled into a bear hug. “What’s he doing here?” Tony grinds out as Thor is squeezing the air out of his lungs in his tight grip.

Before Thor can answer, the Queen stands, “you will stop this at once!” she commands. “You will set aside your petty squabbles and your childish behavior. Steve and Loki must be found. If you cannot help do this, you will leave now.”

“With all due respect ma’am, there is a lot of history with Loki and Steve and even some of the other people present,” Bruce looks directly at Bucky and then at Tony as he says this. “This is a lot to swallow.”

Frigga nods as she sits back down, “I understand, but there is more at stake here than just Steve and Loki’s lives.” She looks to Thor, who has released Tony and is now sitting beside the man within easy reach if need be. The Thunder god begins to speak. It is some time before he finishes telling the group about Thanos. When he does stop, the group is somber and subdued.

Once again it is T’Challa that speaks up, “I believe we can all set aside our differences for the greater good.” He looks to each person individually, waiting until each in turn has given an affirmative answer.

“Are we to assume that Thanos has Steve?” Natasha asks.

The Queen responds, “he was taken by Thanos’ underling. He has a stronghold called Sanctuary. It is outside of the nine realms in unknown space.”

“How do we find this Sanctuary?” T’Challa asks.

“I do not know,” the Queen admits. “Before, I simply would have asked Loki as he knows many ways to travel between worlds, but I do not know of any other sorcerer who has this knowledge.”

Scott raises his hand, like a child in school, “I know someone. Or at least I know of someone who may be able to help.”

Everyone looks to him expectantly, “his name is Dr. Strange.”

Day 246

“You are not an easy man to find,” Thor states as he follows behind the dark haired man, further into his home.

When they reach a small sitting room, the man turns, his red cape swinging with a flourish. “please,
“You know who I am. Do you know why I am here?” Thor asks the sorcerer as he takes the offered seat.

“I know many things, but I prefer to keep my interests focused on Earth. I keep a watch list of those that may pose a danger. For instance, your brother. Up until recently he was here on Earth.”

“But you did nothing.”

“Once he began his association with Captain America, he was no longer a threat, I saw no need to interfere with his activities.”

“Which brings me to why I am here. The Captain has been taken by a being known as Thanos. He is beyond the reach of the nine realms. I have come to ask for your help to find him.”

The Doctor furrows his brow, “this Thanos, is he a threat to Earth?”

“He is a threat to all. He worships death and will sacrifice entire worlds to court her.”

“I will need to consult the ancient texts, come back here in 2 days time. Wong will show you out,” the Doctor says as he gestures to a man that is now standing quietly by the door.

Loki knew exactly where to find Steve, but Yggdrasil does not provide a direct way to Sanctuary and the hidden paths are fraught with danger. When he finally sets foot on sanctuary, he is exhausted, his magic is depleted and Steve’s shield, held in front of his body, shows signs of damage. Most notable are the large set of claw marks across the surface and the paint that has been burned away, revealing the natural silver color of the vibranium below.

He makes his way further into the stronghold until he is standing just outside his own former cell. He knows all too well the tortures that have taken place in that room. Taking a deep breath, he places the shield back on the harness, steps out of hiding and addresses the Other as he strides forward, “it appears you have something that belongs to me.” He barely glances at the blonde, but it is long enough to see the blood staining his hair and running down his face over his swollen eye. His head hangs down and there is no indication that he knows Loki is there.

The Other’s face splits into a semblance of a grin. “Thanos said you would come after your pet.”

“I am here to retrieve what is mine.”

“And why should he give him to you?”

“I have something he wants,” the god states as he turns his palm up and conjures an image of the scepter.

The Other chuckles darkly, “you must really care for this mortal.” He looks closer at the god, who has stepped up to where Steve is sitting on the ground, chained against the wall.

“You desire him.” It is a statement, not a question. “How wonderfully quaint.”

The god squats down and gently grips Steve’s jaw, turning his face side to side, taking in his injuries. “I will admit I have grown rather fond of this one. I would strongly suggest you refrain from causing any more damage.”
“Thanos believes your pet is enough of a leash to keep you in line, but I am not so sure. You have already proven that your loyalties are not to be trusted.”

Loki carefully tilts Steve’s head back and inspects the ring of bruises circling his neck and down his throat where they disappear under the shredded, bloody remains of the soldiers shirt. The blonde slowly blinks his eyes open and looks at the god. Loki gives him a soft smile and releases his grip on his face, “there is no reason to question my loyalties. You can have faith in that.” His words are harsh, but his expression soft as he keeps his back to Thanos’ lackey.

Loki stands and faces the Other again. “Take me to the Titan.”

Steve can feel his body relax, some of his pain easing, before he drops his head forward and closes his eyes.
One Man Army
Sleeping With Sirens

All I ever heard were promises and tired excuses
I'm making up my mind right now, right now
No more looking back, now I'm looking toward the future
Waited for my time, it's right now, right now
Never fear, never fall
Never giving up til' you give me what I came for
Now I think I'm losing patience
Battle stations
All eyes on me, castles falling
Glory, glory
I'll rise like a one man army
I don't wanna die without living
I can't fight without winning
All eyes on me
I'll rise like a one man army
Even when we're lost
it doesn't have to mean we're losing
I will overcome if I fight now, right now
Never fear, never fall
Never giving up til' you give me what I came for
I'm through with all the time I've wasted
Battle stations
All eyes on me, castles falling
Glory, glory
I'll rise like a one man army
I don't wanna die without living
And I can't fight without winning
All eyes on me
I'll rise like a one man army
You miss all the chances you don't take (ooh)
You can't be afraid to make mistakes
All eyes on me, castles falling
Glory, glory (oh)
All eyes on me, castles falling
Glory, glory
I'll rise like a one man army
Day 247

As a rule, Loki does not use dark magic. He is well versed in the craft, but there is always a cost to use it and he has never been willing to pay that price. Dark magic is unnatural and corrupting to any who practice it. He is however, quite willing to step through the dark magic portal the Other creates under Thanos’ command.

The Sanctum Sanctorum is exactly as Loki imagined it. If he were there for any other reason, he would have loved to spend time studying the old texts and magical artifacts within the building, but he is here to do a job and nothing will stand in his way.

He doesn’t get far before he see’s yellow sparks circling his feet. Throwing up a barrier, he leaps to the top of a table and then hits the ground on the other side, spinning on his heel as he pulls his daggers.

“Loki, why have you come?” The sorcerer supreme asks.

The god begins to circle warily, “I am in need of something in your possession.” He advances, daggers held out before him.

Loki has the Doctor pinned against the wall, he uses his magic to hold him immobile. His admiration for the mage has grown considerably. The sorcerer is more skilled than the god anticipated and this fight has drug on much longer than he expected. The fact that Loki has almost 1,000 years of experience gives him the edge, despite his efforts to not damage any of the valuable artifacts, and he is able to reach out and grab the eye, breaking the chain holding it around the sorcerer’s neck.

Taking one of his daggers, he jams it in the wall next to the Doctors head. “If you want it back, come find me.” He pulls back and then disappears, reappearing in front of the Other, who stands ready to open a portal, “take me back.”

Day 248

Wong leads Thor down a long hallway. The god cannot help but notice the damage that was not there on his last visit. He enters the sitting room and his eyes widen as he takes in the destruction before him. Dr. Stephan Strange sits at a large table that has a sizable crack running through the thick wood. In his hand is a dagger that he holds up when he see’s Thor, “look familiar?”

“Loki,” is all the god manages to get out.

Frigga sits across from Thor and Dr. Stephan Strange. She offers the Doctor a cup of tea and then pours one for herself. The Queen already knows Thor will decline and so she doesn’t offer. Loki’s dagger sits on the low table between them. “He said if you wanted the eye back, to come and find him?” She asks for clarification.

“Yes. Your son is very powerful, he could have easily killed me several times and yet he obviously held back. I believe he wants us to find him and his dagger is the key.”

Frigga leans forward and picks up the dagger, turning it slowly in her hand. “I think you’re right. I can feel his magic on it.”
She looks to Thor, “go to the All Father, tell him we will need warriors on the training grounds within the hour. Hogun will lead them. Take your friends as well. They will need to be able to work as a team without yours or the Capitains leadership.”

“And where will I be?”

“You will be with Bucky, the Doctor and I.” She turns back to the Doctor effectively dismissing her son, who takes his leave immediately.

Day 249

“Let Loki play with his pet. Keep him distracted.”

“Why not kill him now?”

“He is still of use to us,” Thanos tells his underling. “Ready the Chitauri. Our ally on Asgard will be ready for you soon and you will retrieve the gauntlet.”

“We have yet to locate the tesseract and the soul stone,” the Other states.

Thanos’ lips contort into a sickening version of a grin.

“Loki?” Steve’s voice is harsh from dehydration and lack of use.

“I’m here,” the god responds as he steps into the cell and kneels beside the Captain.

“I’m sorry Loki. I’m so sorry.”

Reaching out, Loki strokes his hand through Steve’s matted hair. “What ever for?”

“For everything. For not trusting you, for not having faith, for getting caught. God, I was so awful to you and you still came for me.”

“Shhhh, its ok,” the god soothes. “I have been allowed to take you to the room where I am staying. Thanos means to distract me while he plots.”

Loki uses his magic to unlock the chains from around Steve’s wrists and then helps the man to stand. Supporting his body, Loki leads him out of the cell and towards his room. Once there, he leads the soldier into a bath area, before stripping him of the damaged remains of his clothing. He takes a close look at Steve’s wounds before guiding him into the bathing pool. He then retrieves a vessel with water that he hands to the soldier who drinks it greedily. Loki begins to wash Steve’s body of all the dirt and blood.

“How are we going to get out of here?” Steve asks.

Looking down, Loki runs his hand across the water, creating small ripples, “I don’t have a way to get us out.”

Steve furrows his brows in confusion, “how did you get here?”

“There are secret paths that I can travel, but they are very dangerous and I cannot take you with me as I do through Yggdrasil.”
“What about how I was brought here?”

“The Other uses dark magic to travel between spaces.”

“You don’t know how to do it? How to use dark magic?” the soldier asks trying to understand.

For just a moment Loki has a flash of irritation, but he reminds himself that Steve has no knowledge of such things. “You know how to kill someone, yes?” He asks. When Steve gives a nod, he continues, “if you were inclined, to take a life in cold blood, correct?”

Steve frowns, “yes, but-”

“Then why don’t you?” the god interrupts.

Loki can see the understanding as it dawns on the Captains face. “Okay, so what are our other options for getting out of here?”

“We wait.”

“We wait,” Steve repeats and then falls silent as he tries to stand and climb out of the bath.

Loki is immediately at his side, supporting the soldier, helping him to the bed that he conjured when he first arrived. He helps Steve lay on the soft mattress and then sets about healing his wounds. The entire time, Steve allows his body to be manipulated and moved, but says nothing. When he has done all that he can, the god conjures a set of sleep pants onto the soldiers body, then pulls the sheet up to his hips. Finally Loki’s curiosity gets the better of him. “You aren’t going to ask what we are waiting for?”

Steve sits up and the smile that the Captain gives him makes Loki’s heart skip a beat. The blonde leans in and whispers next to his ear, “no, I have faith.”

As the soldier pulls back, he brushes his lips across the gods. He cannot stop the slight tremble in his hand as he reaches forward and brushes a stray lock of hair out of Loki’s eyes. Loki sighs and gives a sad smile as Steve withdraws his touch.

"It’s never going to be simple for us is it?” The blonde asks.

“No, I suppose not, but nothing worthwhile ever is. Now let me tell you what we are waiting for.”

Steve holds up a hand to stop him as something occurs to him, “can’t they hear us?”

With a chuckle Loki tells the soldier, “they don’t even see us. They allowed me to bring you in here to distract me. All they see is a projection of you and I engaged in some rather strenuous….uh…..activities.”

Immediately Steve can feel the blush spreading over his face, “I don’t know if I should be embarrassed or turned on by the thought of that.”

Loki gives his best innocent look, “both, I would hope.”

Day 250

“You called for me?” Thor asks as he enters his mother’s sitting room. He finds her deep in conversation with Dr. Strange as she has been for most of the last 24 hours.
“Please sit,” she instructs with a gesture towards a chair. The god is immediately on edge as he takes the proffered seat. “What is your opinion of the training of the warriors and the Avengers?”

“You have found Loki?” Thor asks without answering the Queens question, knowing she would only be asking if she feels it is time to move.

Dr. Strange speaks up, “we can use the magic he infused into his blade to open a portal to him.”

Thor looks between the two mage’s. “It cannot be that simple.”

“It never is,” Frigga responds. “It is time to retrieve the tesseract. We will need it to make the portal large enough and stable enough to move our warriors through.”

The shock on Thor’s face is evident, “to use an infinity stone in such a manner is dangerous. Are you sure, there isn’t another way?”

“No, there is not,” Frigga responds definitively.

The blonde god nods, “I will go to Heimdall immediately.”

“No. I will take you myself,” the Queen tells him as she stands and reaches for his hand. She does not tell him of the sense of unease she feels around the gate keeper.
Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

I wish to apologize in advance for what I am about to do.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 54

Down with the Fallen

Starset

Tired eyes, barely open
Crippled by a promise broken
I have seen an empire falling
Hopeless, can you hear me calling?

Turn away from all that I know
Burning this bridge behind me
Light the way and I'll Follow
Where you go

Can you tell me what is real?
'Cause I've lost my way again
Can you tell me how to feel?
'Cause I don't feel anything
Now that I'm down here again
I'm down with the fallen again

Searching through the darkness below
For a light in seas of shadows
Far from you, but I could never
Abdicate, I'll fight forever

Turn away from all that I know
Burning this bridge behind me
Light the way and I'll Follow
Where you go

Can you tell me what is real?
'Cause I've lost my way again
Can you tell me how to feel?
'Cause I don't feel anything
Now that I'm down here again
I'm down with the fallen again

I will not run
I will not fall
I will not bury it

This is war
War
This is war
War

Tell me what is real
'Cause I've lost my way again
Can you tell me how to feel?
'Cause I don't feel anything
Now that I'm down here again

Tell me what is real?
'Cause I've lost my way again
Can you tell me how to feel?
'Cause I don't feel anything
Now that I'm down here again
I'm down with the fallen again

Day 251

Bucky stands beside Frigga on the training fields. They look over the warriors as Hogun moves among them evaluating and encouraging each one in turn. Thor and Dr. Strange have taken the Avengers to a nearby field where they too are training. Everyone can sense the tension in the air, they know they are almost out of time.

“Will they be ready?” Bucky asks the Queen.

She turns and looks at the man beside her, taking in his features, the boyish charm that is almost completely overwhelmed by the soldier he was turned into against his will. With time, if he survives the coming battle, she hopes he can regain some of the man he once was. Turning back to the warriors she tells him, “no amount of training will prepare us for what is to come.”

Bucky nods his head in agreement, turning his head when he hears someone approach.

“I think we are as ready as we can be,” Dr. Strange tells them as he takes his place beside them. “We should probably let them rest so they will be ready to go at first light tomorrow.”

“And the portal?” Bucky asks.

Keeping her eyes forward, Frigga responds, “we will be ready to open it.” With a wave of her arm she signals Hogun and he calls an end to the training.

“Our spy tells us there is much activity on the training grounds of Asgard,” the Other reports.

“They mean to move against me.”
“Asgard does not have the means to reach us here.”

Thanos grins at his underling, “the first son of Odin will no doubt use the tesseract. I will be sure to thank him for delivering the stone before I kill him.”

“And the gauntlet? The Chitauri are on Svartalfheim at the ready.”

“Go then. The bifrost will be opened as soon as Thor has left Asgard unprotected.”

Day 252

“Wait here,” Loki tells Steve as he gets up to follow Thanos’ minion. When he stands, his clothing are transformed into his Asgardian leather and armor. He stops only to grab Steve’s shield and attach it to the modified harness on his back. He flicks his wrist as he closes the door behind him, changing Steve’s clothes into his Captain America uniform. The blonde sits on the bed and waits as Loki instructed.

The god is led before Thanos who sits upon his throne. “You will bring me the soul stone,” he tells Loki.

“I don’t know where it is.”

“Then I suggest you start looking immediately,” Thanos says with a grin.

Loki narrows his eyes, “it could take some time to locate and retrieve it.”

The god can hear a sound before he sees what is causing it, but his stomach sinks, because he already knows. He tries not to react outwardly as he watches Steve being hauled around a corner by four of the Chitauri. There are several burn marks on his uniform from the Chitauri energy spikes along with a cut just above one eye. They must have gone after him as soon as Loki was out of sight.

“I think, with the proper motivation, you will find it,” the Titan laughs. “He will serve the Chitauri well. It will take them a while to figure out he will not make good breeding stock, but by then, there won’t be much left of your pet.”

Loki looks to Steve whose expression exudes fierce defiance. The Titan is forcing his hand and so the god pulls the shield from his back and hurls it towards Steve. The blonde catches it and smashes the face of the closest Chitauri before twisting around as he punches the next one. A knee to the chest fells another as the soldier pulls the energy spike from the creatures hand. Using the spike, he shocks the last of the Chitauri then brings his shield down against its head. Within a few seconds, Steve has incapacitated his captors. Loki strides to his side, pulls him close and then they disappear.

The Titan frowns to himself. The godling has defied him yet again. He and his little pet will be amongst the first to die.

“We are ready,” Thor announces to the Queen as he looks out over the training grounds at the amassed warriors. Hogun stands at the front with Sif, Volstagg, Fandral and the Avengers just behind him.

The Queen turns to Dr. Strange, “then let us go.”
The two mages pour their magic into the device surrounding the tesseract. A beam of light shoots into the sky just as a portal pulls open before them. “Quickly!” she directs Hogun, who immediately begins ushering the Asgardians through. The Avengers follow them, leaving Thor, Frigga and the Doctor. Frigga and the Doctor step through, holding the portal open with their magic for Thor. Once they are all safely through, the mages release their magic, allowing the portal to close.

Heimdall twists the sword in the bifrost gate, opening the way to Svartalfheim, allowing the Chitauri forces to pour out onto the bifrost bridge. The Other directs his forces across the bridge before he disappears.

“All Father!” the sentry shouts as he runs into the throne room. “Enemy forces on the bifrost bridge!”

Odin rises from his throne and strides out. With his sons and the warriors three absent, he will lead his forces himself. Outside the throne room he signals the guard, “send out the call. The Einherjar will defend Asgard.” He makes his way towards the front of the palace, confident that Asgard’s elite warriors will be there to meet him in the defense of their home. Emerging out onto the steps of the palace, Odin is surprised by the sheer number of Chitauri advancing towards him. The Einherjar have begun to gather and Odin signals for them to hold until the Chitauri are halfway across the bridge.

The Other appears just inside the Kings vault and makes his way towards the gauntlet. As he rounds the corner, he finds Heimdall standing in front of it, sword raised. For a brief moment he is confused until he see’s Amora step out from behind him.

“Why are you here?” the Other demands.

The sorceress laughs, “you aren’t powerful enough to break the protections on the gauntlet. Not without me and a little help from our friend here.” She gestures to the gatekeeper who has yet to move.

“And what do you expect for giving your help?”

Amora approaches the Other and slides a hand up his arm, “only what Thanos promised me. I have allowed your army into Asgard and will help you retrieve the gauntlet. All I asked for in return was Thor.”

She turns Heimdall to face the gauntlet as she pulls a dagger from her belt, “I just need a little of your blood.” He stands compliantly as she slides her blade across his palm and allows his blood to drip on the gauntlet.

“If you are done with him, kill him.”

“Not yet. I still have use for him,” she smiles at the gatekeeper, running her eyes approvingly over his body. She raises her hands and begins to utter an enchantment to use the gatekeepers blood to unlock the magical seals around the gauntlet.

The Other doesn’t comment on that. He has no care for what Amora does after he is gone. Asgard will soon be destroyed along with her and the all seeing gatekeeper. “Are you sure his blood will break the spells?”
“There are only four beings whose blood Odin used that can unlock the protection on the gauntlet and three of them are gone. His will work.”

She steps back and turns to the Other, “it is done, we will be able to break the other enchantments with ease.”

Hogun has the Asgardian warriors positioned and ready to move on Sanctuary. He waits for the Widow and Bucky to return from scouting the area. Hogun has elected to have the rest of the Avengers, Sif, Volstag and Frandral each lead groups of Asgardians.

A few hours have passed before Natasha and Bucky return with their report and have gathered everyone together for one last planning session.

Bucky pulls out a piece of paper and begins to draw out a crude map of the area. “There are these creatures, large, multi armed, here, here and here,” he says as he marks the map. “At least 700 total, with the largest concentration in this location,” he adds pointing to the western most group.

Natasha picks up the narrative here, “Once you get past them, there is a stronghold. Chitauri guards, but also some others, looked to be about 5 of them, highly trained, very dangerous. I could see a few prisoners, but they look pretty far gone. Not sure if we can get them out.”

Dr. Banner frowns at this, even though he knows Natasha is probably right.

The Widow looks back to Bucky who continues the report. “After that is Thanos himself. There was no sign of Steve or Loki,” he concludes as he looks apologetically to Frigga.

The group spend the next few hours organizing their warriors and finalizing battle plans.

Odin stands, sword in one hand, Gungnir in the other. Both are stained with the blood of the fallen. If he is surprised by the sheer ferocity of the Chitauri, he does not show it as he leads his elite warriors from the front. He can discern no plan, no objective for the attack. He worries that they are meant only as a distraction. As the advancing forces begin to falter and their numbers are significantly reduced, Odin pulls several of the Einherjar and sends them back into the palace. He himself makes his way to the vault, concerned that if the Chitauri are a distraction, then the true target may be there.

Inside the vault, the Other and Amora have broken the last of the protective spells and Thanos’ underling grabs the gauntlet from its pedestal.

“The gauntlet is not meant for the likes of you, creature!” Odin shouts as he enters the vault.

The other turns to the All Father and his face splits in a gruesome smile, “you are correct.” He disappears before Odin can do anything else, leaving Amora and Heimdall in his wake.

Hogun’s warriors engage the multi armed creatures from two sides, leaving the middle forces untouched. The hope is to draw some of the creatures out to the other battle grounds, thus decreasing the number of combatants Thor, Frigga, Dr. Strange and Bucky, along with T’Challa and Black Widow and their groups of warriors will have to face.
Tony, Bruce, Sam, Volstagg and Sif lead the assault on the large western front while Hogun, Fandral, Scott and Clint attack the Eastern group. It doesn’t take long to realize that the creatures are almost mindless, relying on numbers and brute strength alone.

“Kill him,” Amora whispers in Heimdall’s ear. The gate keeper does not hesitate as he raises his sword and charges at the All Father. Odin uses Gungnir to block the first strike as he swings his own sword then thrusts it forward meaning to impale Heimdall.

Amora is momentarily startled at Odin’s lack of restraint and is not able to block the blast he sends at her from Gungnir that he unleashes when his strike misses Heimdall. Amora hits the ground hard. Odin’s magic is far stronger than hers and she knows this, but she also knows he is an old man and cannot believe he would use magic to strike down his All seer, leaving the gatekeeper at an advantage with his superior height and strength.

Amora rises to her knees and begins to weave a spell to bring the All Father under her thrall. Having a puppet King could prove to be useful. Odin can feel the tendrils of her magic as they reach for him. He spins away from Heimdall and vanishes. Reappearing behind the sorceress, he raises his sword and beheads her in one quick movement. Odin raises Gungnir and sends a pulse of magic directly into the gatekeepers chest, causing him to stagger back. Pressing his advantage, the All Father thrusts his sword forward directly into Heimdalls stomach. The dark skinned man drops to his knees and Odin sinks down with him, holding the sword in place as his hand glows with golden light.

“All Father, I am sorry. I have betrayed Asgard. My life is yours to take,” Heimdall whispers

Odin draws the sword back, withdrawing it from the gatekeepers stomach. The wound immediately begins to heal, “Gram see’s the truth in you. Amora’s poison has been drawn from within.”

“I’m not sure we will be able to save them Steve.”

The blonde doesn’t like it, but he cannot deny the truth of Loki’s words as he looks at the condition of the prisoners in this section. “I know.”

Steve moves on to the next cell and peers inside. As near as he can tell, the being in this cell is already dead. He moves to the next one, empty now. Steve is grateful that his time there was short, but has to repress a shudder when he thinks back on what he knows of the time Loki spent in that cell after he fell from the bifrost.

A gunshot draws his attention and he follows the sound, with Loki right behind him. He rounds a corner and finds Bucky grappling with a woman with blue and purple skin. T’Challa is fighting two of the guards while Natasha crouches behind an upturned table, where she picks off additional guards, as they enter the area, with her stingers.

Thor is surrounded by a group of four warriors, all humanoid in shape and clearly highly trained. Loki pulls his daggers and runs to aid his brother, even though it is unlikely the Thunder god needs his help. Steve accesses the situation before pulling his arm back and letting his shield fly. His aim is true and four guards fall just as he catches the shield on the ricochet.

Dr. Stephen Strange steps out of the astral plane in the center of the room, “Thor!” he shouts to get the gods attention.

All eyes turn to the Doctor, but shift away as Thanos enters, Frigga held by her arm, tight against his
chest. On his hand is the gauntlet. There are two empty settings, one for the space stone of the tesseract and the other for the soul stone.


When Thor does not move, Thanos moves his grip up to Frigga’s neck where he begins to squeeze. The Queen fights to breathe past the constriction of her airways and cannot help the small whimper that escapes her. Loki’s eyes are wide as he looks to his brother. “Thor…”

Loki is not sure if he is begging his brother to hand over the stone or to keep it hidden. Thanos squeezes just a little tighter on Frigga’s neck and looks to Loki, “will your Queen be enough to keep you in line when your pet was not?”

A low growl emanates from Loki’s throat that quickly builds into a roar. He thrust his hands out and sends a burst of magic at Thanos, knocking the Titan to his knees in his rage. As soon as she is free, Frigga disappears, reappearing next to the Doctor. The strange tableau is broken and the fighting resumes all around. T’Challa moves to Thor’s side and helps him with his four opponents.

Loki grabs Steve’s shield from his hand and charges in close to the Titan striking him in the head, across the body, in the chest. Loki strikes at him over and over, letting his fear and rage add power to his onslaught. Out of the corner of his eye he sees Steve move forward to help and he quickly flips the shield to him, which is easily caught and Loki draws two long handled daggers from the sheathes at his waist.

In an instant, both men are on Thanos. They work in tandem reigning blows down over and over. Thanos is able to take a wild swing against his attackers and knocks Loki on his back several feet away. Steve is momentarily distracted as he looks at the god and barely gets his shield up in time to block Thanos fist from making contact with his head.

Bucky shoves the woman with the blue skin he had been fighting towards the Queen and the Doctor before he jumps forward and drives a blade into Thanos’ outstretched arm. Thor uses Mjolnir to call the lighting and channel it into the wound.

Thanos clutches his arm to his body and staggers back several steps. Bucky and Steve exchange a brief look and both charge the Titan, Bucky going low at Thanos’ thighs and Steve puts all his force behind the shield as he makes contact with the Titans chest. Thanos falls back with Steve and Bucky on top of him just as Loki launches himself into the air, coming down with both blades out.

He stabs one into the Titans throat and drives the other into his left eye. He pulls back enough for Thor to use Mjolnir to drive the blade deep through the eye socket where the magically hardened tip impacts the back of the skull splitting it open.

A silence falls over the area as everyone looks upon the fallen Titan. It is Loki that speaks up as he reaches his hand out to Thor, “the tesseract, brother. We will need it to get home.” Thor removes the pouch at his waist and hands it to his brother.

Steve lets out a pained cry and Loki turns to see him impaled on the end of one of the Chitauri energy spikes wielded by the Other.

“Steve!” Loki screams as he pulls another one of his blades. The god slices clear through the creature’s neck, severing his head. The body falls to the ground, the energy spike pulling from Steve’s chest and clattering to the floor. The soldier crumbles to the ground and Loki grabs him, pulling his body up into his lap. There is a large gaping wound in Steve’s chest.
Placing his hand over the wound, Loki tries desperately to heal it, but he already knows its too late, Steve is gone.

Dr. Strange lays a hand on Frigga’s arm and whispers, “do you feel it?”

And she can. The pulling, sucking sensation as vast amounts of power are pulled in to her youngest son as he tries to pour it all into his dead lover. Natasha and T’Challa have drawn closer, as have Bucky and Thor. Frigga grabs Bucky and Natasha by the arms and pulls them back. The others follow, staying close together in their shock. Both mages can feel the change in the room and they throw up a combined shield just before Loki lets out a wail of despair and releases a wave of energy.

Those not within the magical barrier are instantly vaporized. Loki gently lays Steve’s body on the ground and then rises. He picks up Thor’s pouch, where he had dropped it, then strides over to the pile of ash that was once Thanos. Picking up the gauntlet, he opens the pouch and pulls out the tesseract. The cube shifts and shrinks until Loki can place it within its setting on the gauntlet.

The god shoves his hand into the gauntlet, causing it to shrink down to fit his slender hand. The look of rage on his face terrifies Frigga, “Loki no!”

Chapter End Notes

Odin uses Gram, the sword of truth to purge Amora's magic from Heimdall.
Chapter 55

Song #3
Stone Sour

If you take a step towards me
You will take my breath away
So I'll keep you close and keep my secret safe
No one else has ever loved me
No one else has ever tried
I never understood how much I could take
Then I saw the worst was over
When I layed my eyes on you
It was all that I could do to know my place
Out of all the vast illusions
Out of all the dreams come true
I was gone until I finally saw your face
If you cry out for more
If you reach out for me
I will run into the storm
Just to keep you here with me
I have gone beyond my years
Wasted half my life
But I found it all in you
Did I save you?
'Cause I know you saved me too
Let me take a step towards you
Let me feel you in my hands
Let me cross this line and show you where it leads
There's a darkness down inside me
That I know we'll both enjoy
And it's screaming from within to set it free
I have left this bloodied nightmare
In my wake but I don't side
All I want is deviation by design
Out of all the past confusion
Out of all the common spite
Just tell me I am yours 'cause you are mine
And if you cry out for more
If you reach out for me
I will run into the storm

Just to keep you here with me
I have gone beyond my years
I wasted half my life
But I found it all in you
Did I save you?
'Cause I know you saved me too
It doesn't really matter what you do or say
I'm never going anywhere anyway
'Cause when I'm dying for you
I've never felt so alive
If you cry out for more
If you reach out for me
I will run into the storm
Just to keep you here with me
I have gone beyond my years
I wasted half my life
But I found it all in you
Did I save you?
'Cause I know you saved me too
I know you saved me too

Day 252 continued

“Steve…” Bucky chokes out as he takes a step towards his best friend’s body. No one else moves, frozen in shock. This was not supposed to happen. Captain America cannot be dead. More importantly, Steve Rogers cannot be dead.

Loki jerks his head between Bucky and Steve before his manic gaze settles on Bucky, softening for just a moment before hardening again, causing the soldier to step back several paces. A low humming noise begins to emanate from Loki as the air ripples around him.

Frigga turns to the Doctor, “get them out of here.” She turns to her elder son, “Thor, take your friends and go.” The Blonde nods and reaches his arm out to direct everyone to the portal Dr. Strange has opened to Hogun’s warriors.

The Queen doesn’t question when Bucky refuses to go with a sharp shake of his head. She watches the others as they make their escape and then turns back to her youngest son as Doctor Strange closes the portal and moves back to her side.

Loki’s body in engulfed in a golden light as he draws on the power of the combined stones.

“Loki,” Frigga calls out to him in alarm. “Don’t do this. Please, I know it hurts, but you are better than this.”

With a roar, Loki touches the ground beneath his feet and unleashes the power he has gathered to himself. Frigga can feel the resulting shockwave in her bones as the energy rushes out deep within the core of Sanctuary itself. In his grief, Loki means to destroy them all. The ground shakes as the very core of Sanctuary begins to tear itself apart.

And then it stops.

“Thor! What the hell was that? What’s going on?” Tony shouts as soon as he see’s the blonde god step through the portal with T’Challa and Natasha.

After having decimated the ranks of the multi armed creatures, the Avengers and the Warriors Three
have gathered the Asgardian forces and have been tending to their wounded while waiting for word from Thor and the Queen. They expected to be called into action against Thanos and the confusion at seeing Thor return is evident on their faces. When the ground began to shake under their feet, they knew something terrible must have happened.

Thor cannot bring himself to speak, he cannot make himself say the words and it is T’Challa who steps forward, “Thanos has been destroyed, but we have lost Steve Rogers.”

Scott narrows his eyes as he swallows down the lump that is forming in his throat, “what do you mean lost?”

“He was slain.”

Scott’s gasp is audible. He idolized Captain America as a child. Working with him had been a childhood fantasy come to life. And now………now his hero is gone.

“What’s Loki?” Clint speaks up from his perch on a nearby rock.

It takes a moment for anyone to answer. What do they tell them? How can they explain that if Frigga cannot bring Loki back from his grief, he will surely destroy them all? Thor holds out hope that since it hasn’t happened yet, that maybe Frigga has been successful. “He is not well,” he states. “Steve’s death….” he trails off, unwilling to say anymore. Barton and Stark have already made their feelings regarding his brother known. Let them live without the knowledge of what is happening or let them die, not thinking any less than they already do of his brother. There is nothing to be gained by sharing Loki’s struggle.

Loki looks around, angrily raising the gauntlet, ready to strike out. He stops when he see’s three shadowy figures standing close to Steve’s body. “Get away from him!” He shouts. “You have no right!”

“Stop!” The foremost one commands as she pulls an orange stone out from the folds of her cloak and holds it out to the god.

Loki immediately knows what she is offering him. The soul stone, the final gem needed to complete the gauntlet. With it he will have the power to destroy the universe, which is exactly what he wants to do.

“You would offer me the means to destroy us all?” He growls.

“You are faced with a choice Loki-“

“Do not be mistaken into thinking I will not do this. You brought this on. You place him within reach and then rip him away. Fate has made me a monster, unloved, undeserving of kindness. You tease and you taunt with thoughts of what might be, what you never intended to let me have. You are fools if you expect anything else from me.”

“A millennia ago your destiny was altered to allow a divergence-” the fate begins only to be cut off again.

“For what purpose? You gave him to me. I followed the divergence only to have it ripped away.”

“No Loki. The divergence is upon you now. We give you the final stone so you can choose your path,” she tells him as she offers the stone to him again.
He grabs it and seats it within the gauntlet. It glows briefly with power and he examines it, feeling the potential held within. “Fools,” he snarls.

“The gauntlet is the ultimate power, by possessing such a force you can transcend the limits placed on mortals and gods alike. You have the choice Loki. You can go forward from here. Build a life, move past your fears, your anger, your pain. Or you can use its power to destroy us all and everything you are feeling at this moment, will end.”

In the end that is all Loki wants, for everything he is feeling to end. “I have nothing, no future without him. I don’t want it,” he cries as he moves to sit on the ground and cradle Steve’s body. He looks back at the fates and the expression on his face can only be described as feral.

He pulls his lover’s body tight against his own, placing the gauntlet against his chest. Loki pulls at the power of the stones, pulling the wave of energy back from within the ground below.

Frigga can feel the change around her. She can’t see it, but she can sense the barrier Loki has erected around himself. Bucky looks at her, eyebrows drawn together, “what just happened? What is he doing?”

“I don’t know,” she answers honestly, unable to keep the waver out of her voice.

He closes his eyes and re-opens them within the library of the Sanctum Sanctorum. The god moves directly to the most sacred books secured within the depths of the library. Moving quickly he checks each book until he finds the one he seeks. With a thought, he breaks the locks securing it in place.

Loki takes the book and sits at a table. Opening it, he runs his hand down each page, turning them faster and faster as he absorbs the information, only stopping when he locates the particular page he came for. He reads over the spell one more time, ensuring he has all the details and then pulls his consciousness back to his body.

Leaning down he places a kiss on Steve’s cold lips and begins to whisper the spell as he draws on the gaUNTLETs power. He pulls at his own life force, pulling it up and out, funneling it through the stones and into his lover. His chest feels tight as his heart beats faster and faster and then slows and then stops altogether. He has a last moment of consciousness, just long enough to see Steve suck in a breath.

Loki collapses and Frigga runs to kneel next to her son, unable to touch him due to the barrier he placed. Frigga turns to the fates, “please, you must stop this.”

“We cannot. What has been set into motion cannot be stopped.”

The Queen turns to Dr. Strange, “what has Loki done?”

This ancient spell, untested due to the shear amount of power it takes to wield, the sorcerer knows exactly what it is. “The livsoverføring,” he whispers.

Frigga whips her head back around to look at her son. In her long life, Frigga has heard stories of such a spell, but never once believed it to exist. “Loki….” she breathes as her heart clenches in anguish.

Doctor Strange grabs Frigga’s hand and pulls at her magic, channeling it out into Loki and Steve.
The air crackles and shimmers around them as the barrier collapses without Loki to keep it intact. The Queen rushes forward and pulls at the gauntlet until she is able to wrench it free.

“Enough! The divergence is complete. Loki has made his choice. Steve Rogers will live, however, the cost is high.”

Bucky dares to step closer to his two friends. He is certain he saw Steve pull in a breath just before Loki collapsed, but what does that mean? Neither man moves and Bucky cannot see any other signs of life from either of them. “What is it? What did he do?” Bucky demands.

“The livsoverføring,” Frigga tells the soldier, “the life transfer.”
Chapter 56

Scene One - James Dean & Audrey Hepburn
Sleeping With Sirens

Stay for tonight
If you want to, I can show you
What my dreams are made of
As I'm dreaming of your face
I've been away for a long time
Such a long time
And I miss you there
I can't imagine being anywhere else
I can't imagine being anywhere else but here
How the hell did you ever pick me?
Honestly, 'cause I could sing you a song
But I don't think words can express your beauty
It's singing to me
How the hell did we end up like this?
You bring out the beast in me
I fell in love from the moment we kissed
Since then we've been history
They say that love is forever
Your forever is all that I need
Please stay as long as you need
Can't promise that things won't be broken
But I swear that I will never leave
Please stay forever with me
It goes to show, I hope that you know that you are
What my dreams are made of
And I can't fall asleep
I lay in my bed awake at night
And I'll fall in love
You'll fall in love, it could mean everything
Everything to me
This could mean everything to me
They say that love is forever
Your forever is all that I need
Please stay as long as you need
Can't promise that things won't be broken
But I swear that I will never leave
Please stay forever
The way that we are
Is the reason I stay
As long as you're here with me
I know I'll be OK

Day 252 Continued

Frigga, still holding the gauntlet, waits and watches, keeping vigil over her son and his lover until she hears the sound of movement. She quickly kneels beside the men and reaches out to stroke her sons cheek. She can see Steve breathing shallowly. He stirs and tries to sit up. “Loki?”

He looks to Frigga, concern written on his face and then his gaze drifts to Bucky and the Doctor. Finally he turns to the figures of the three fates, before turning back to his lover.

“Loki gave himself so that you may live.” Frigga tells him, reaching out and brushing a lock of hair back from her sons face.

Steve shifts closer to the god where he wraps him in a tight embrace. He places his hand on the back of Loki's head and whispers in his ear, "Loki......its time......we're ok.....Loki......please.....I need you to come back to me now.....I just.....I wanna go home....."

“Steve, he’s gone,” Frigga tells him, heart breaking.

“No he’s not,” the blonde replies gently. “I can feel him. He’s not gone.”

Bucky steps forward and kneels beside his friend. He rests his hand on Steve’s shoulder, “Steve, he did something, used some spell to bring you back.”

Steve smiles fondly at his love as he strokes his dark hair back from his face. “I know. The livsoverføring.”

Dr. Strange steps forward, “how do you know that?”

The blonde shrugs, “I saw it. In a book.”

“When did you see it?” Frigga questions, trying to better understand.

Placing a gentle kiss to Loki’s forehead, Steve looks up at the trio surrounding him, “when he used it. When I came back. There were things, images, flashes of memory.”

Frigga’s heart aches for this young man. His love for her son, so clear on his face. Bucky’s eyes dart back and forth between his two friends. Never one to believe in miracles, he knows he has already seen the impossible today.

Steve looks back to Loki, “I’m so proud of you. You did it. You changed your fate.” He pulls him up to kiss his lips, slow and soft. Mouth widening into a smile when the gods hand reaches up to gently grip his blonde hair.

Frigga’s sob is audible as is Bucky’s low relieved chuckle.

“Proud? That’s not something I think I’ve heard before,” the god smirks, eyes still closed.

Steve just grins and pulls Loki in for a crushing kiss, arms wrapped tightly around him.

The god shrugs out of the embrace and stands, leaving Steve staring up at him. He offers his hand to
the blonde, which is taken immediately and helps him up. He does not release Steve’s hand as he walks the few steps to face his mother, ”we’d like to go home.” He releases Steve’s hand and reaches for the gauntlet, placing it on his fist. “Where are the others?”

Dr. Strange speaks up, “I can take us to them.”

“And what of them?” Frigga asks as she indicates the fates, who have been quietly observing.

Loki’s gaze turns to the fates, “what of them? They are of no concern to me.” And he turns his back to them.

The Doctor opens a portal and sweeps his arm out, in a gesture to indicate they can go through. Frigga goes through first, followed by Bucky. Steve grabs Loki’s hand before they also step through. Dr. Strange is the last and he closes the portal behind himself.

“Brother!”

“Steve!”

“What happened?”

The group are greeted by a chorus of shouts as they exit the portal. Thor rushes forward and pulls Steve and Loki into a crushing hug. Loki, none too gently, taps on Thor’s shoulder to encourage him to let go as Scott steps up and pulls Steve into a slightly awkward hug. “Sorry,” he mutters as he steps back, cheeks turning pink with embarrassment.

The Captain chuckles in response and clasps a hand on the brunets shoulder, “its ok.”

Natasha is the last to approach and she too pulls both men into a brief hug.

“He has the gauntlet,” Clint snarls from behind her.

All eyes turn to Loki, who raises the gauntlet up. “This is our way out of here.” He clenches his fist, causing a portal to open to Asgard.

Hogun immediately begins to usher his warriors through, where they emerge within the gatekeepers observatory.

“No!” Clint shouts angrily. “He cannot be allowed to keep the gauntlet.”

“Clint, its fine,” Natasha tries to reassure, placing a hand on his shoulder.

The archer’s eyes are wild as he shrugs off her touch. “You cannot all be okay with him having it!” He pulls an arrow out of his quiver and draws it back, meaning to pierce the gods heart.

Loki stands still and watches as the arrow is loosed. He has no fear of the Midgardian weapon. It is Steve who moves to protect him. He moves his shield in front of the god, knocking the arrow off its trajectory and it impacts against a rock 50 yards away. The flash from the explosive tip only serves to anger Steve more. “Its time to go,” he says through gritted teeth.

No one else has said a word through this exchange. It is Scott who moves first to step into the portal behind the last of the Asgardian’s. Tony has been uncharacteristically quiet and Bruce, although tired from his transformation back from the Hulk, grabs his arm and drags him through as well.
Frigga gathers T’Challa and Dr. Strange, moving them towards the portal, leaving Thor, Bucky, Natasha, Clint, Steve and Loki.

Reaching out, Thor pulls Clint by the arm towards the portal, “come Barton, let us go home.”

“I’m not going anywhere with him,” he snarls.

“Oh for the love of ………” Loki crouches down and places the gauntlet against the ground which immediately begins to tremble. “This place will be torn asunder in minutes. Would you still refuse?”

The Archer crosses his arms stubbornly over his chest as the god rises back to his feet.

“Fine, have it your way,” Loki tells him and twitches his fingers.

“What did you do to him?” Natasha shouts when Clint vanishes.

“I sent him home, to his wife and children.” The ground rumbles ominously under their feet. “We should make haste,” he adds gesturing towards the still open portal.

Natasha still pauses, only a few people know of Clint’s secret and she has no doubt Loki found out while the archer was under his control, “could you have sent us all home like that?”

Loki smirks, “I didn’t think it prudent to send everyone to Barton’s farm.”

“No, I meant…..you know what? Never mind,” she replies as she turns to leave, Thor right behind her.

Steve flicks his chin towards the portal, silently telling Bucky to go through as well. Loki takes just a moment to linger, grabbing Steve’s hand with his own. He pulls the blonde into a kiss as the ground begins to shake again. They break apart when one particularly hard jolt sends Steve stumbling backwards. “I guess that means we should go,” the blonde smiles. They turn and step through the portal together.

Most of the warriors have dispersed across the rainbow bridge towards the palace when they emerge. They find Natasha whispering to Tony, reassuring him that Clint is quite alright.

Thor approaches the gate keeper. He can tell by the way the man holds himself that he is attempting to conceal some injury. “How fare thee, my friend?” The blonde god greets.

“I am here. That is enough for now, thanks to the All Father’s wisdom and mercy.”

Nodding solemnly, Thor responds, “perhaps that is a tale left for another day. Can you please send my friends home?” He asks as he sweeps his arm out towards Natasha, Scott, T’Challa, Bruce and Tony, who are all standing together.

“It would be my pleasure,” the gatekeeper smiles as he twists the bifrost sword and does just that.

Even though he is wary, Loki knows there are still matters to attend to. He can see the damage to the rainbow bridge from within the observatory and the gauntlet will have to be seen to as well.

“A carriage will be here shortly to take you to the palace. The All Father awaits.”

“Thank you Heimdall,” the Queen tells him with a smile as she turns and leads her sons, Steve, Bucky and Dr. Strange out of the observatory.

The ride to the palace is quiet as the group surveys the damage from the Chitauri attack. To the
Asgardian’s relief, the damage to the palace itself appears to be minimal, as the Einherjar were able to protect its walls. Their carriage is met by the King himself and they are all led directly to his private meeting chambers.

The All Father wastes no time with pleasantries, “the gauntlet?”

Loki huffs out a laugh, “right to the point I see.”

“I have already spoken to Hogun. I know Thanos was destroyed. I also know you are in possession of the gauntlet. A weapon that powerful must be safe guarded.”

“I agree,” Loki states simply.

“Then hand it over and I shall secure it in the vault.”

Leaning back in his seat Steve speaks up, “I’m not sure your vault is the best place for it actually.”

The edge of Loki’s mouth curls up into a smile as he watches Odin’s reaction. “The vault is the safest place for it! Impenetrable and hidden—“

“But it is neither of those things father,” Thor interrupts. “Loki was able to get in, several times in fact. Malekith, Amora and Thanos’ creature were all able to get in. The vault is not secure against magic wielders.”

“Then what do you suggest?” The All Father questions.

Once again it is Steve that speaks up, “let the Doctor take it. He can best secure it and keep it safe from others that use magic.”

For a long moment Odin looks between the group as he considers the suggestion. “The idea is not without merit. However, we will need to discuss this in more detail.”

Steve smiles tightly, “naturally.” He reaches over and takes Loki’s hand, pulling the god to his feet. “But Loki and I are both just dead tired, so if you’ll excuse us?”

Bucky snorts out a laugh at Steve’s little joke, while Frigga covers her smile with her hand, “of course Steve,” she says. “You and Loki can go. We will see to the gauntlet.”

The dark haired god leans down to kiss his mother on the cheek. He pulls the gauntlet from the pouch at his waist and hands it to her before striding out of the room. Steve turns to follow his lover, nodding to Thor and the Doctor on the way out. He reaches out and squeezes Bucky’s shoulder as he walks past him.

When Steve exits the room, Loki immediately sets off down the hallway at a fast pace, all but dragging the blonde after him by the hand. He stops in front of the door to his room. With a light touch, the heavy door swings open and he steps aside to allow Steve to enter.

After closing and locking the door, Loki pulls Steve along into the bathroom where he turns on the shower. He sets the shield aside and begins to remove pieces of the Captains uniform. When he has Steve undressed he moves his body under the warm spray and then starts to take off his own armor and leathers.

Loki steps behind Steve and presses his chest to the blonde's back, then he grabs the soap and a cloth and begins to wash his lovers skin. He can feel Steve lean back into him as he continues to run his hands over the warm flesh. Loki only pauses when he encounters an injury and then only long
enough to heal the wound. It takes less effort than it should to heal the blonde as his body repairs itself faster than even his advanced healing should allow.

Steve leans forward slightly and braces his hand against the wall while Loki works to wash the sweat and grime from his back. When he is finished, he turns Steve to face him and begins to wash his hair, massaging the scalp as he does. Steve is silent, relishing the feeling of Loki's tender touches.

When the last of the soap is rinsed away, Loki reaches up, places his hands on either side of the soldiers face and draws him into a soft kiss. "Go, dry off, I will be out shortly," he tells Steve and ushers him out of the bathroom so he can wash himself.

When he emerges from the bathroom, he finds Steve already asleep, snoring lightly, in the overly large bed. He shakes his head at his derailed plans for the night, then gently lifts the covers and crawls into bed with his love, pulling his body close, before drifting off to sleep himself.

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Chapter End Notes

Only 2 more Chapters to go.......
Chapter 57

Chapter Summary

A little fluff and smut to make up for everything these two have been through. And Steve really wants to replace the chair they broke so long ago.

Chapter Notes

Shameless commandeering of some Star Wars lore ahead.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 57

Famous Last Words
My chemical Romance

Now I know
That I can't make you stay
But where's your heart?
But where's your heart?
But where's your heart?
And I know
There's nothing I can say
To change that part
To change that part
To change
So many
Bright lights that cast a shadow
But can I speak?
Well, is it hard understanding
I'm incomplete?
A life that's so demanding
I get so weak
A love that's so demanding
I can't speak
I am not afraid to keep on living
I am not afraid to walk this world alone
Honey, if you stay
I'll be forgiven
Nothing you can say can stop me going home
Can you see
My eyes are shining bright?
’Cause I’m out here
On the other side
Of a jet black
Hotel mirror
And I’m so weak
Is it hard understanding
I’m incomplete?
A love that’s so demanding
I get weak
I am not afraid to keep on living
I am not afraid to walk this world alone
Honey, if you stay
I’ll be forgiven
Nothing you can say can stop me going home
These bright lights have always blinded me
These bright lights have always blinded me
I say
I see you lying next to me
With words I thought I’d never speak
Awake and unafraid
Asleep or dead
I am not afraid to keep on living
I am not afraid to walk this world alone
Honey, if you stay
I’ll be forgiven
Nothing you can say can stop me going home

Day 253

Frigga stands with Steve, Loki and Bucky in Heimdall’s observatory.

“The Doctor has volunteered to stay on Asgard until the gauntlet can be fully secured,” the Queen tells them. She turns to Bucky, “where would you like to go?”

Bucky looks to his friends, “actually, I was thinking of staying here. Maybe do some training and the healers said they can take a look at my arm.” He turns to Frigga, “if that’s ok.”

The Queen smiles brightly, “of course. You are welcome to stay here. For as long as you like.”

Steve tries to keep the disappointment off his face. He just got his friend back and now he would be gone again. But of course Loki see’s it. “We can come back any time Steve. You will not lose him again. I promise.”

Nodding his head, Steve looks at his best friend before pulling him into a hug. “You take care of yourself.”
“Of course I will.” To Loki he says, “You take care of Steve for me. You know he won’t do it himself.”

The god grins in response while Steve huffs out a laugh.

“And you? Where would you like to go?” Frigga asks the two lovers.

Loki takes in the hopeful look on the blondes face, "Colorado, home to Colorado," he says with a soft smile meant only for his love.

"Heimdall? If you please?” Frigga calls and the men are instantly enveloped in bright light.

The bifrost deposits Steve and Loki outside the cabin in Colorado. For several minutes they simply stand there, arms wrapped around each other before going inside. Loki pauses just inside the door and looks around. This place, his home, now their home, it is so full of memories. Mostly good, but some bad. He looks forward, for the first time, to creating new ones.

“Are you alright?” Steve asks.

“Tore am as I am supposed to be.”

Steve smiles and takes Loki’s hand, leading him to the bed. “We did it. We changed your fate.”

“We did, didn’t we. I guess you were right. We are fated to be together.” Loki sits down and pulls the Captain to sit beside him. “Steve I am sorry.”

“For what?”

“For everything. For hurting you. For being scared. I spent so much time pushing you away. And then when you….when I did lose you…..I don’t want go through that again.”

Steve smiles and reaches out, taking Loki’s hand and turning it palm up. The soldier places his palm on top of Loki's then looks into his lovers eyes, "Mhi solus tome, mhi solus dar'tome, mhi me'dinui an, mhi ba'juri verde."

Loki eyes widen in surprise, as Steve raises his hand from Loki's, exposing a swirl of energy with wisps of red, white, blue and green. "Where did you learn this?" Loki whispers, unable to pull his eyes from the swirling mass.

"My magic. You got some of my magic.” Loki is stunned by this unexpected consequence of the transfer. He knows this is something they will have to explore more, but for now, “do you know what this spell is? How it is meant to bind?”

“Yes, I just thought....if this isn't what you want it's ok.... I shouldn't have presumed. I mean, I also saw the spell you used on me and what you gave up.”

“And you are sure?” Loki cuts in. “After everything I have done? You would want this?”
“I’m sure.”

Loki can feel the tears that threaten to fall as he brings his palm back together with Steve’s. “What is the use of living another 4,000 years if you were not going to by my side. Giving half of my life to you was a small price to pay to keep you with me.” He takes a breath, "Mhi solus tome, mhi solus dar'tome, mhi me'dinui an, mhi ba'juri verde." Tightening his grip on Steve’s hand, he inner laces their fingers. A shy smile plays at his lips, but there is no fear, no sense of panic, only peace. "I love you, my husband."

Steve’s mouth falls open as his heart speeds up, “You love me….”

Leaning in, Loki cups the side of Steve’s face with his free hand. He gently kisses his new husband's lips as his thoughts turn to the future. A future he never dared hope for. It is Steve shifting on the bed, pulling Loki with him that brings his thoughts back to the present. He allows himself to be guided until he is laying on his back with Steve propped up on one arm, looking down at him.

“Can you……can you say it again?” the blonde pleads, voice low with need. Not just physical, but an emotional need, deep within, to hear those words. To finally know, to finally have what he always thought was out of reach.

The god is happy to oblige. Thrilled at the prospect of being able to give Steve this. “I love you.”

Steve lets out a moan at the surge of pleasure, both physical and emotional that those words create in him. He shifts and moves to be between Loki’s legs, pulling his shirt off over his head before reaching down and working open the buttons on Loki’s. When he has them all open, the god lifts his shoulders and shrugs out of the shirt. He pulls Steve back down with him as he reclines again. Wrapping his arm around the soldiers broad back, Loki holds him in place as he crashes their lips together with want.

He only releases his lover when he feels Steve start to grind his hips down impatiently. Loki works a hand between them and opens the button on the front of Steve’s jeans then pulls down the zipper. He slides his hands inside the back of Steve’s jeans and cups his muscled ass as the blonde twists his hips to get more contact.

Steve pulls away only long enough to shed the rest of his clothes before turning his attention to Loki’s pants. He pauses to take in the site of the god laid out before him. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he leans over and pulls a bottle of lube from the nightstand drawer, where he knows Loki keeps it. He slicks up his hand and gives Loki’s cock a few slow strokes before shifting his hand down and gently probing his hole.

Steve takes his time working his lover open, being sure to prepare him thoroughly so as not to hurt him. Now is not the time to rush. He wants this moment to be perfect. The ultimate consummation and demonstration of their union.

When he is sure Loki is ready and not a moment sooner, he moves between his legs and positions himself at the gods entrance. Loki shifts his hips up to make the angle easier and then gives a small nod to let Steve know he is ready. The look of complete openness and surrender on his husbands face is enough to make Steve’s eyes tear up and he pushes forward slowly, never breaking eye contact. “I love you, Loki,” he breathes.

The god smiles and reaches up a hand to run it through Steve’s blonde hair, “I love you, Steve. So very much.”
Later as they lay wrapped in each others arms, Loki takes a moment to dream about a future. One that he never dared to hope for. He places a kiss on the top of Steve’s head and lets himself drift off to sleep.

Day 254

“Loki…..Wait….Loki, hold on,” Steve pants as he raises his torso up and grips the headboard in front of him. Loki slows his pace, giving the blonde a chance to brace himself against the sturdy wood with one hand while he grips his swollen cock with the other. “Ok. I’m good.”

The god grins and runs his palm down the muscled plane of his husbands back, offering a small amount of tenderness before he thrusts his hips forward forcefully, causing the headboard to creak ominously under the onslaught. “Ahhhhhhh…..” Steve groans out as Loki resumes his previous pace, hard and unrelenting and just what his lover begged for.

Day 255

Loki’s head thumps back against the wall as his eyes squeeze shut. “Steve, you have to let me…….” he trails off only to gasp as the blonde wraps his lips around him again.

Steve has been teasing him relentlessly and gleefully for entirely too long from his position on his knees, bringing him to the edge again and again. He pulls back and slowly strokes along Loki’s length until the god opens his eyes and gazes down on him. “Will you beg?” the Soldier teases.

It’s too light, not enough friction to bring Loki over, “yes! Yes, please Steve. Just let me come.”

With a grin, Steve licks up the underside of his husbands cock, then takes just the head into his mouth before pulling off again. “Will you tell me you love me?”

“Yes! Please, I love you. I love you!” Loki is all but writhing against the wall, eyes watering and legs beginning to shake.

With a wicked glint in his eye, Steve takes Loki’s entire length in, causing the god to sigh in relief, only to pull off once again. “Will you let me pick out the new chair?” He asks with a grin.

Loki gives a low moan as he looks upon the face of his lover. The grin, the glint in his eye, his ruffled hair and pink swollen lips are all too much and the god needs release, “yes! You can pick the chair, anything you want. Just please…."

With a chuckle, Steve opens his mouth and swallows Loki down to the base, working his throat to get every last inch down. Giving an inarticulate cry, Loki comes hard, his vision blacks out for a moment and he begins to sag down the wall. Steve backs up, but supports his husband as he
gracelessly shifts to sit on the floor.

“So I’m thinking I want the overstuffed one. In leather, with the ottoman,” Steve tells him with a serious face. He starts to struggle not to laugh as Loki’s expression shifts from relaxed and dazed to just confused.

“Are you……are you talking about furniture?”

The Captain stands up and offers his hand down to help Loki up, “yep. Now lets go get cleaned up so we can go get my chair.”

Day 256

Steve sits in his new chair with Loki draped over his lap.

“I was thinking,” the god begins. “As much as I like our cabin, we will need to look for a new place to live.”


“I know. But, I’d like to have a place that we choose together. Something that is both of us. And I was thinking about the children. 3 of them, yes? We will need rooms for each of them. An office, maybe an art studio for you.”

Steve swallows hard, “that sounds wonderful, but we’ll keep this place too right?”

“Of course my love. We need a place to keep this chair. It’s not going in the new house,” the god grins.

After everything that has happened, to be sitting here, planning his future with his husband. It’s almost too much and so he pulls Loki just a little closer and buries his face against his shoulder, breathing in his scent as he allows his tears to fall.

Chapter End Notes

The spell Steve uses is a Mandalorian marriage contract.

We are one whether we are together or apart, we will share everything and we will raise our children as warriors.
Chapter 58 Epilogue

Chapter Notes

There are several companion pieces for this chapter over in the First of Many.
Chapter 3 You got married
Chapter 22 Not a declaration
Chapter 4 Magic? -Bucky
Chapter 17 Centennial Celebrations
Chapter 9 Being Exposed
Chapter 1 Christmas
Chapter 2 New Year's
Chapter 8 Valentine's Day
Chapter 19 Silver, red, white and mostly blue
Chapter 20 Don't Tell Steve
Chapter 5 Getting Caught
Chapter 12 Temptation

If you prefer an exact order refer to The Order of Things. Which lists out each chapter for all the pieces in this series. I have also tried to notate each chapter with where they fit in the time line.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 58 Epilogue

How Did You Love
Shinedown

You can have a sound of the thousand voices calling your name
You can have the light of the world blind you, bath you in grace
But I don't see so easily what you hold in your hands
'Cause castles crumble, kingdoms fall and turn into sand
You can be an angel of mercy or give in to hate
You can try to buy it just like it every other careless mistake
How do you justify I'm mystified by the ways of your heart
With a million lies the truth will rise to tear you apart
No one gets out alive, every day is do or die
The one thing you leave behind
Is how did you love, how did you love?
It's not what you believe those prayers will make you bleed
But while you're on your knees
How did you love, how did you love, how did you love?
Nothing ever feels the quite same when you are what you dreamed
And you will never look at anything the same when you see what I see
How we forget ourselves, lose our way from the cradle to the grave
You can't replicate or duplicate, gotta find your own way
No one gets out alive, every day is do or die
The one thing you leave behind
Is how did you love, how did you love?
It's not what you believe those prayers will make you bleed
But while you're on your knees
How did you love, how did you love, how did you love?
This ain't no cross to bury
We are the judge and jury, we are the judge and jury
No one gets out alive, every day is do or die
The one thing you leave behind
Is how did you love, how did you love?
It's not what you believe those prayers will make you bleed
But while you're on your knees
How did you love, how did you love?
This ain't no cross to bury
We are the judge and jury

Day 267

“I think I’m getting better at this,” Steve says with a grin as he turns and shows Loki the small flame dancing in his palm.

Loki answers with a grin of his own, just before he reaches out with his own magic and snuffs out the flame.

“Hey! I was just getting the hang of that.”

The god reaches out and takes Steve by the hand, “there will be time to practice later. We’re gonna be late.”

This is the sixth house they have looked at today and the fifteenth overall, but Steve can tell right away that Loki likes it.

“What do you think?” he asks cautiously, not wanting to get his hopes up.

Loki takes one last look around the spacious living room, letting a small sigh escape. “Its perfect.”

1 year and 9 months after day 1

Loki looks up from his book when Steve walks in the door. He can see the tension in the blonde’s shoulders as he pulls off his jacket and hangs it up. The god waits, trying to gauge his husband’s mood. When Steve gently shifts Loki’s legs on the couch where he has been reading and sits next to him, he immediately pulls in him close. “How did it go?”

With a shrug, Steve answers, “better than I expected, not as good as I hoped.”
Pulling him just a little closer, Loki responds, “Stark will come around. He was willing to meet with you. That’s something.”

“You’re right. And he isn’t drinking the way he was. I don’t know if he’ll ever be able to forgive Bucky, but with time I think we’ll be able to work well together again.”

“And the Avengers? Will you be going back to lead them again?” Loki asks tentatively.

Steve shifts so he can look at his husband. “No, I’ll leave that to Sam. He’s doing well as Captain America.”

“And so you will not fight? I have a hard time believing that. You haven’t stopped so far.”

The soldier smiles, “I’ll fight. You and me and Bucky. If the Avengers need us, we’ll be there. And who knows, things may change and I’ll go back, but for now, this is good.”

6 years and 2 months after day 1

The two men climb the steps to their home in Brooklyn. Steve squeezes Loki’s hand and then puts the key in the lock and opens the door. Neither man is surprised to see Betsy sitting in the living room.

“You’re back earlier than I expected,” she greets.

“For once the intel was good. Minimal injuries and I think Tony will be able to get some good information from the hard drive we salvaged,” Steve answers as he drops his duffle bag by the door.

Despite his insistence that the mission went well, both men are dirty and look tired. “Why don’t you two go clean up and get some rest. I just got them to sleep so don’t even think about waking them,” she warns.

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Loki answers with a grin, as he grabs his husband’s hand and pulls him down the hall. They stop in front of one of the bedroom doors. Steve gently cracks the door open while Loki uses his magic to create a soft illumination. They both quietly creep into the room and stand gazing down at the sleeping toddlers. A boy and a girl, both with blonde hair, the girl with green eyes, the boy with blue. Nearly inseparable, they sleep in toddler beds pushed together in their shared room.

Loki reaches over and intertwines his fingers with Steve’s. One of the twins shifts and so both reluctantly exit the room, knowing that if the children see them, they will not get any sleep. Just outside the door, Steve pulls Loki into an embrace and rests his forehead against the other man’s. “I love you.”

Loki smiles and steps back, pulling Steve towards their own bedroom, then leads him into the bathroom where he turns on the shower and adjusts the water temperature.

“I’ve been thinking,” Loki begins as he starts to remove the black leather of Steve’s uniform.

“Oh? That can be dangerous,” the blonde jokes as he allows Loki to unfasten his pants, while he in turn reaches up and begins to work the clasps on the front of Loki’s tunic.

The god favors Steve with a crooked smile as he bends to remove Steve’s boots and pull his pants down. The soldier takes the opportunity to pull off his shirt as Loki straightens and removes the rest
of his own uniform. Both men step into the large shower relishing the warm water on strained muscles. This, their ritual, cleansing each other of the strains and stress of battle, leaving that portion of their lives behind and stepping into the life they both prefer, the one they fight in order to protect.

“The twins are getting older and having Betsy here to help has been great, especially now that their magic is beginning to manifest,” Loki begins as he gently washes Steve’s back. When he is satisfied that all the dirt and grime is removed, he turns the Captain by his shoulder and begins to wash his chest and neck. Steve is patient, knowing Loki will get to what he wants to say in his own time.

“Yes, I agree, she has been a big help….”

“I know we have talked about the possibility of another child,” Loki tells the soldier, keeping his eyes on Steve’s chest and arms as he works. “You are a wonderful father Steve Rogers, I would love to complete our family.”

Steve cannot hold back the grin on his face, “really?”

Loki looks into his husband’s eyes and knows he has made the right decision, “yes, love. In fact, I was thinking we could start right now,” he says huskily as he leans in to kiss Steve’s neck, knowing that the blonde cannot resist.

Steve stops him, with a hand placed on his chest, "wait a minute. you know the rules."

Loki grins mischievously, "how could I forget love."

"I'm pretty sure I counted 8 take downs for me and 7 for you. Does that sound about right?"

"Yes love," Loki grins again. "What would you like love?"

Steve takes a moment to rake his eyes over his husband’s naked form.

"Maybe next time I'll let you win," he smirks, "but for now, I want your legs wrapped around my waist while I take you right here."

The hitch in Loki’s voice is the only thing that gives away his excitement, "you know, I was holding back and let you win."

Steve chuckles as he pulls his husband close. "Somehow I think you would have chosen the same thing." He growls in Loki’s ear just before licking and then biting down on the god’s neck.

Soon Loki’s back is against the wall and his legs are wrapped around Steve’s waist as the blonde thrusts up into his body. He has his arms wrapped around his lover with his head resting on Loki’s shoulder.

A constant stream of praise and adoration comes from his mouth, "I could barely take my eyes off of you tonight. You looked so good. The way you move. So graceful, so forceful and all mine. I’ll never grow tired of watching you and when you use your blades. Its so..... you make it look so easy and you look so good while doing it.” Steve lets out a long moan as he continues to thrust. “Oh god. Loki......Loki......I'm......ahhhhh......," he thrusts a few more times, through his release, then gently taps Loki's thigh. The god loosens his legs from Steve’s waist and shifts so he is standing. His cock is throbbing with need and he stands with his head back against the wall, eyes closed.

"Sorry. Guess I was a little more excited than I thought," Steve says just before he kneels and takes
Loki into his mouth.

7 years and 1 month after day 1

Steve leans against the headboard, next to Loki on their large bed. The god is dozing lightly while Steve holds his newest daughter in his arms. The blonde is already in love. Her black hair and bright green eyes clearly come from the god. Steve looks to his husband and his heart swells with love for the man that has given him everything he ever wanted, someone to love, a family with their 3 beautiful children, a sense of belonging.

He knows that thanks to Loki’s Jotun heritage, his body will recover quickly from the changes needed to carry their child, but he also knows he will require much rest over the next week and he lets him sleep.

There is a soft knock at the door and it cracks open just enough for Betsy to peek her head in. “These two are anxious to meet their sister,” she explains.

Steve grins at the twins, straining to see inside the room. “Of course. Daddy’s sleeping so let’s be quiet, but I think there’s enough room for all of us up here,” Steve whispers as he sits up more and makes room for one child to sit on either side of him.

The twins scramble up on the bed and lean in to look at the baby. Steve glances to Loki and smiles sheepishly when he sees the god is now awake. Loki shifts closer and rests his head against Steve’s shoulder. Neither man notices when Betsy exits and gently closes the door behind her.

18 years after day 1

Steve pulls at the neck of his uniform again. “I don’t know why I get so worked up every time we do this.”

Loki chuckles as he stops Steve’s hands from moving and places a soft kiss on his lips. “Because you care so much. This is your brain child.” He brushes his hands across the blonde’s shoulders. “The academy is thriving and you should be very proud of all you have accomplished.”

“All we have accomplished,” Steve corrects. “I couldn’t do any of this without you.”

Glancing at the clock, Loki makes a quick decision. “Stark won’t be here for another 45 minutes to start the assessments, let me help you with some of this tension,” he purrs suggestively.

Steve only quirks an eyebrow at him as he watches his husband sink to his knees. With a flick of his wrist, Steve uses a bit of magic to lock his office door so they aren’t disturbed by Tony like last time.

32 years after day 1

“Are you ready for this?”

“No, of course not. I knew we never should have brought the kids to Asgard that first time.”

“You know my mother was quite insistent on that. And really, this is for the best. Eiren will have a long life. It is better for her to marry someone who will be with her for longer than a mortal life span.
And Casian loves her. He will make a fine son in law.”

Steve smiles wistfully, “yeah. I know you’re right.” A thought occurs to him, something that he has never been willing to ask his husband before. “What would have happened with us, if you hadn’t given me half of your life span?”

The god smiles, “that was not to be our fate.”

His smile turns mischievous as he adds, “and just think of the grandchildren they will bring us.”

398 years after day 1

“Dad, what’s this say?” The little girl with the blonde hair and blue dress asks.

Her father looks at the plaque mounted at the base of a bronze statue featuring two men. One with shoulder length hair and a long coat and the other with short hair and holding a round shield on his arm. The star emblazoned on the uniforms of both their chest is instantly recognizable as is the stylized horned helmet on their shoulders.

“This is a statue to honor Loki and Steve Rogers.”

“Who are they?” She asks as her younger brother climbs up to perch on the base of the statue.

The father smiles warmly at his children, “These men founded the Avengers Academy,” he tells them pointing to the plaque on the base of the statue. “When you get into school you will learn more about the Avengers and their origins.”

“I want to be an Avenger when I grow up!” the boy announces as he jumps down from the statue.

“If you work hard and apply to the Academy you very well could be.”

The girl takes her father’s hand and looks up at him as he begins to lead his children away from Avengers Tower, “can you tell us a story about Loki and Steve at bedtime?”

“Of course honey. Now lets go meet your mom for lunch.”

Loki smiles as he stops the video feed. He thought his husband would enjoy seeing how his vision of the Academy is still exciting children after all these years and he was right. The blonde pulls him into an embrace.

“Thor said he needs us on Alfheim to help with an insurgence. He has a team in place waiting for us to get there.”

“He has become a good king,” Loki muses. “When do we leave?”

“We have a little time,” the Captain grins as he pulls his husband to the bedroom.
Chapter End Notes

This is the final official chapter, but I have decided that I really like this little world and there are so many stories left to tell.

Do Clint and Steve ever become friends again?  
What happened to Bucky?  
How will Steve deal with outliving his friends?  
And so on.....

I've decided to add some works, mostly one shots as they pop in my head. Suggestions are welcome.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!