A Temple Heart

by Patchouli (lifelesslyndsey)

Summary

No one prays to the Olde Gods anymore. That is, until Darcy Lewis.

Given a supplicant, Thor becomes one himself.

Spare me all religion
Save the one between your thighs
And summon my holy spirit
On your breathless broken cries

Notes

If y'all have read Darcy Does - you might recall Chapter Four, with Darcy and Thor. This a fic born from that.

It's a completely different verse, but it is very much Chapter Four of Darcy Does.

I won't be updating regularly just yet, I just couldn't resist posting this. It was eating me up.
I'm still working on Darcy Does (Darcy/Everyone) and New Tricks (Darcy/Tony) and they have priority at this venture.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Thor tilted his head back, and watched the inverted form of Jane scurry about the labs. He thought he'd like Norway, with its homages to his people, but he found it cold, and strangely empty. Beautiful, with sweeping, watercolor landscapes and fresh mountain air but...sterile. Dead.

He missed the city terribly.

Jane's lab was quiet, only him and non-sequential chirping of Jane's machines to offer any sound. Jane rarely spoke, and when she did it was under her breath and to herself.

Before, when Jane lost herself to the stars, he'd easily found comfort and companionship in the Lady Darcy. But she had not accompanied Jane, and when asked, Jane hadn't offered an explanation. Thor hoped she was well, wherever she be, for he'd grown fond of her brash, wild spirit. She'd have offered some type of entertainment in these empty moments, music, or stories, or pictures from her phone. Perhaps Thor would get a phone. Perhaps he'd call her.

He looked out the window, to the cosmos he once called home. They were beautiful, yes, but they did not enrapture his heart like they did to Jane. They did not call to him, and they offered little mystery. They were simply stars. Thor missed New York. He missed the Iron Tower, and he missed his companions.

He looked at Jane, once more. She was beautiful, and she had passions. But they were not his passions. Thor was a warrior, not suited for idle days. He liked the battle, and spice and life. He liked the wildness the crush of Earth had brought, the spontaneity of Midgard people not steeped in ancient custom. He liked surprise. He liked to do, and not think.

He really liked to do, and since his return... There hadn't been much done.

He had once found her reticence for engagement outside the bedroom to be charming. But such winsome pleasures had lost their delight when other pleasures - ones she'd limited to the privacy of their shared quarters were staunchly limited to the dawning hours of what scarce days Jane deign to visit their shared bed and not cast herself to dreaming on the couch he now sat upon.

On Asgard, it was long since taught that the rarity of fruits made for the sweetest bite. Perhaps that could be true, but what had been rare now seemed barren, and scarcity had made him sour.
Hard up, Stark had called such situations. And Thor felt as such. *Hard up.*

Had their passions fizzled? He knew such things came with long companionship, but he was *young*, and their relations new. Sweet Jane, dressed in his Midgard attire, the soft fabric dwarfing her little frame. Jane was small, even by this realms standards, a waif of a creature really. She had seemed so ethereal when first they met, willowy and thin-limbed like something out of a fairy-tail. Undressing her that first time had seemed magical, the shape of her body so strange and otherworldly, Thor still considered it a gift. She was not a solid lass, not a shieldmaiden or warrior, like those of his planet. Even the common people of Asgard were born with strength and curve, but Jane...she was bewitching as a wisp, lighting up a new and different path.

He would never deny he liked the difference in their forms. The smallness of her shape made him feel bigger, stronger. It was a vanity he had yet to shake, one that made his mother shake her head at him, and one he was fairly certain he might never grow out of. Small women, small *Midgardian* women, he liked them.

Beautiful, delicate, tiny Jane. It was disheartening to learn that her bewitching smallness came with a fragility he had never encountered, but there was merit to it too. Jane had taught him a tenderness he had never bothered to learn before and it had served him well on this, her delicate realm. He was not disappointed in their lovemaking; *when* she came to bed with him, well and truly they came together. She had her passions and he enjoyed them; he had a sense that she would not enjoy his in turn.

Not violence. Never that. The warrior he may be, there was a time and place for bloodshed and he had no taste for such between sheets. Just something...more hearty. There were times -mostly when he lay awake and alone in their quarters while she tinkered with the stars - that he missed the careless rough and tumble of bedding the statuesque women of Asgard. If for no reason but the hearty *Warriors Welcome.* Thor had been gone some time by Midgardian standards - three months, six days, four hours and some many minutes. He had hoped Jane would welcome him a little more heartedly, but as it were - she’d barely noticed his return.

He did miss her. Greatly. But his heart, he was beginning to realize, was not in Norway. He picks up a book - a thick, heavily illustrated tomb of Norse Mythology that Darcy had gifted him - and scribbles a new correction, a new annotation.

***

It was the silence that agitated him. A storm rolled overhead, unforeseen, and Jane’s mouth grew tight when she looked at him. “Can you not?”
Outside, lightning swept the sky, electric purple and blinding. “I am not accustomed to being inside for so long,” he apologized, but his words were stilted and short. “Excess energy will manifest how it chooses, should I not expend it myself.”

“That go expend some yourself.” She shot a pointed look toward the bedroom, and it gulled him something terrible. *Go fuck yourself,* a voice much like that of Darcy Lewis’s translated in his head. Go fuck yourself. If only it were that easy.

Thor snorted. “Believe me, I have. Three times today. Twice out of simple boredom. It isn't enough.” His balls were sore and his cock chaffed and still, he was bored and agitated. Hmm.

Jane stopped from where she was tinkering with one beeping machine or another. “If we have sex, the storm will stop?”

The clouds were angry, a roiling summit of black emotion. They had little to do with those desires. Telling her though, what had brought them on, would only distress her. Thor was unhappy here, and the storms were calling him to leave. How could his happiness not be here? With her? He lied. “It is likely.”

“Well... Okay. Easy fix.” She rounded the machine, and headed toward the mouth of the observatory, toward the living quarters. “Aren't you coming?”

She was smiling, hair pulled back into a braid, and her eyes were as bright as the day he met her. Thor had never wanted her less. “No,” he said, pushing up from the couch. He collected Molinjer, and headed in the opposite direction of Jane, toward the deck.

“What? Why? I need these storms cleared if I'm going to---”

“I'm not a means to an end, Jane Foster,” he told her, tightly, pushing open the double doors. The air was harsh, a crisp bitter cold. He welcomed it.

*****

He didn’t return until morning, long after the storms had calmed. He found Jane in the observatory, asleep on the couch. When she roused, it was as if they never quarreled. She didn’t seem to care that he left, and in anger. Anger with her, and how she could not see the cosmos for the stars. That she
might deign to lay with him to clear the skies, but not for the simple joy of it...burned him. And the burden of hard truth was heavy. She didn’t seem to care at all.

The dismissal only served to upset him further.

“I do not believe my company here is beneficial to you,” he told her, stiltedly. She was only half listening, and Thor felt static crackle at his fingertips. She didn’t care. “I intend to return to New York.”

Jane did look up at the mention of the city. “New York? What for?” She has missed the first half his declaration.

“Jane,” Thor said, slow and even. “Do you want me here?”

“Of course.” It was an easy answer, and an easy lie because it was, perhaps, half true. “What’s this all about? Last night?”

“I am not meant to sit upon mountains.” He was not made for mountains, or couches, or idle days. He was made for thrones and battles and...and anything but this.

Jane frowned, but her hands were restless, half her mind all ready for her machines. “I don’t understand.”

“What I mean to say is----”

A shrill, sharp ringing filled the domed glass ceilings, and Thor flinched at the grating noise. Across the room, over the flat white wall left of the doors to the living room quarters, a familiar face shimmered into view on one of Starks quaint Holo Screens.

“Darcy!”

His heart all but missed a beat at the blinding grin she blesses him with. “Thor! We didn’t know you were Earthside. Damn, Odinson, did you get bigger?” He felt it elsewhere too, when she winked at him, lascivious mouth curling up at the corner with a smile that made him hot all over. A shameful
space in his mind whispered he was weak - this was his beloved’s sister of the heart, and the sight of her should not build such fires. But even ensorcelled by love, he’d never been blind to the female form. He was touch-starved, and she was lightly dressed, with her hair a mess like she’d rolled smiling from someone’s bed, pert nipples visible beneath her pale top ------and he’d been bewitched by her body before - in the confines of his mind because she was Jane’s heart sister- but never on the tail end of such a dry spell. “Come on, give me a spin. Drop that ass in a circle. I wanna see the rest.” By the Norns, but it had been too long since he laid with Jane or any woman at all. Her teasing attentions were more than Jane’d spared him in weeks and Darcy was little more than a tricksters shade upon a wall right now. A lovely shade, though. His friend. Janes friend.

If she were here, she would embrace him with the whole of her body and Thor would---try not to enjoy it so much. By and by - it had been too long since he’s felt any kind touch at all.

“Darcy,” Jane cut in before Thor can do anything like conceding to Darcy’s request of shirt-lifting. She admired his abs and perhaps Thor was hard up enough to appreciate the admiration. He was vain. He always had been. “You needed something?”

Darcy’s gaze skittered past Thor and lost every iota of warmth so quickly, Thor felt Jotunheim frostbitten. “You missed your one am check in.”

“Shit,” Jane muttered, mostly to herself. “There were storms---”

“Internet service logs show no interruption,” Darcy intersected. “Check-ins are a mandatory part of your grant, Ms. Foster. We’ve made concessions to accommodate your adjusted hours in Norway and the time zone variation.” Darcy looked at her wrist pointedly, bare of any time device but Thor understood the sentiment. “It is now three am, my time, nine am yours. That’s eight hours past check-in. This is the third time.”

“Darcy, you know how I get....” Jane laughed, but it was thin and strained and Thor had clearly missed something vital while he was gone.

“How you get,” Darcy’s smile was as thin as Jane’s voice, “is not an excuse. If you’re too busy to check in, perhaps you could allocate that requirement to your intern.”

“You know I don’t...That I didn’t bring one.”

“Yes. I’m aware.” She blinkee at Jane, and the blank frankness of her face made Thor deeply
uncomfortable. “Further failure to check in will result in grant assessment. One week, one am. Check-in.” She turned away from Jane to Thor, the hologram projection flickering faintly. For Thor, she smiled. “It really is good to see you, Big Guy. Will you be staying at the tower when Jane returns to New York in nine weeks?”

The very idea of spending nine weeks in the observatory set Thor on edge so fiercely, the skies crack outside, darkening like ink in water. “I intend to return much sooner. Tomorrow, perhaps. Tonight.” Suddenly, under Darcy’s genuine thrill to see him, the walls seem smaller, and more crushing. “I just made mention of it to Jane, when you called.”

“Oh man. Tony’s going to be thrilled! He’s been working on Thor Proof armor. Synthetic lightning is all well and good, but we need the real deal, Thunderdome. Plus, Cap needs someone to make him feel less conscious about how much he eats, and I’m just a girl with a growing ass, please spare me. We’ve missed you!”

Thor felt suddenly and strangely choked. “I...You as well. I did not know you stayed behind at the tower.”

“Stayed behind,” Darcy echoed, a flinty look flashing across her gaze. “I work for Tony now, actually. You’re looking at the public face of the Avengers. “

“It could not ask for a better one.” It’s out of his mouth before he can stop it, bordering on flirting but then - that is Darcy’s way and it is the heart of Thor all the same.

“Speaking of - we should get some promo shots of you. Shirtless, preferably. And sweaty.” She winked salaciously, as is her way, and Thor feels warm all over. Behind him, Jane made a noise and Darcy’s open expression steelee to something stiffer. “I should go. Jane - check in.” The call cut and the holoscreen blinked away, leaving nothing but the bare wall in its place.

“Darcy is angry with you,” Thor said, in lieu of anything else. It was the most obvious of statements, but he has never claimed to be a coy man, and Darcy’s ire is a pressing matter. It is important, at least, to him.

“I guess.” Jane shruggee and the guilty set of her shoulders put Thor's teeth on edge to match the rest of him. “I haven't spoken to her in a while.”

“That doesn't seem like Darcy.”
Fiddling with a wrench, Jane shrugged her delicate shoulders again and turned to the metal box once more. “She’s mad that I didn’t extend her internship to employment after she graduated.”

Internship, Thor had learned upon his first arrival at Midgard, was something like indentured service. Not quite slavery, but akin nonetheless. Upon her time served, she would be free to seek gainful employment. “Why did you deny her employment?”

Jane huffed, tossing the wrench aside for another tool. “Because she isn’t qualified to work for me, Thor. I’m not saying she wasn’t amazing when she interned; I wouldn’t have gotten nearly as far without her. And I appreciate that I do! But...this isn’t the job for her. She’s got a degree in political science. I’m an astrophysicist. It made more sense to hire someone with an actual education in my field.”

“Darcy’s knowledge of the stars is limited,” Thor agreed, resuming his position on the tiny couch. Half his thoughts were already for the Team and Darcy. He felt ashamed to see his spirits lifted to easily, and away from Jane, but he could not deny it. “I can’t help but think she’d understand though your reasoning. Darcy is...vivacious yes. But she’d understand.”

“Yeah,” Jane said at length. “I mean. I knew that. I know that. I just. Maybe. Didn’t. Tell her....that I wasn’t extending her internship to employment.”

Thor stared at her for a long moment. “You didn’t tell her? Then who did? Stark? Banner?”

“I didn’t know how?” Jane said, voice tilting into a question she didn’t know how to answer. “I...I wanted to tell her. I may be... Maybe I had her screen candidates to fill the position.”

“Position as intern, or assistant?” Thor felt both his brows raise incredulously. “Jane. Did you truly make Darcy train her replacement, under the assumption she’d find employment with you?” Such cruel trickery would make his brother smile. Thor understood Darcy’s icy tone now.

“I let her pick! I gave her full carte blanche.” She wrung her hands over the screwdriver. “I don’t even need an assistant. I can use the grant money for their salary on furthering my research. An intern makes more sense. There’s a clause in my contract with Tony to cover room and board for an intern and even a little stipend. I had him put it in there for Darcy when I accepted the job. So it’s not like...I mean, an internship is part of life okay? I interned for Erik!”
“And he employed you,” Thor argued, mildly. “You’ve not done right by Darcy. When did she find out your trickery?”

“Trick— No. I mean. I just...I wasn’t trying to hurt her. I just didn’t know how to tell her. Thor.” Her pretty face twisted, mouth pouting. “After she graduated, her key cards for the top eight floors expired. Jarvis explained. I...did talk to her afterward. She was...upset.”

“She was homeless,” Thor reasoned. If her room and board were components of her internship, and further employment, that much was obvious. “She was homeless, jobless, betrayed by her dearest friend and very, very far from home. I think she had the right to be upset.”

“She wasn’t...Tony hired her. Like, the next day.” She shot him a beseeching look. “PR is a better fit for her, than assisting an astrophysicist. She’s amazing at it, and she loves it. She’s happy.”

“Do not claim altruism for your decision to leave her blind and abandoned, Jane Foster. Did you know that Stark would hire her? Had you planned for it? Spoken to him? Made arrangements?” Certainly not. Such tasks were usually Darcy’s job. Jane could not be bothered to pull her head out of the stars long enough to realize other people existed.

“You know how important my research is to me,” Jane sounded tired. Her patience was thinning, but so was Thors. He had always thought Jane and Darcy were sisters in arms, like his Warriors Three. His brothers would not deign to leave him behind though, and so perhaps Thor had misjudged Jane in this. It stung like any failure did.

“Yes,” Thor drawled, feeling anger burn in the pit of his belly. “I do.”

Jane paused, elbows deep in the metal box once more. “What does that mean?”

“It means that I know full and well how important your research is.” He leaned back on the couch, spreading out to take up as much room as possible. Petty and childish, he did not care. “How it comes before aught else.” It was endearing, he told himself. How much she loved the stars. He’d loved it about her. He did love it about her. Endearing. Charming. Tiring.

“Yes,” she said, through clenched teeth. “I adore Darcy. But I need actual help when I return to New York.”
“I don’t deny that an indentured servant with knowledge of your work would serve your research better,” Thor told her, slow that she might understand. “Darcy served your heart. You will find no better than that.”

“Indentured--- Intern,” Jane argued. Thor knew it wasn’t the proper term on Earth, but it was not wrong and so he said it anyway. “It’s not... You don’t get it.”

“No, I don’t.” Thor pushed up from the couch and collected his cape from where it was draped over the arm. His hammer next, from its place on the coffee table. “Did you miss me, my Jane? While I was gone? Or was my absence a balm to you, that you might have more time for the stars? Did you notice?”

“Of course I missed you,” Jane balked. “I always miss you.”

“How long was I gone?” There was no constant exchange of time between Asgard and Midgard, just a general estimate. Jane looked away, eyeing the calendar. She didn’t know, Thor thought, and it angered him. He knew how long he had been gone, seven Asgard days, and it had been a long and tiring journey. He had missed her. Missed home, this realm that now held his heart. “Three months, or so.”

“There was a time when my arrival would have been met with more arduous greetings,” he told her, hefting Molinier over his shoulder. “Instead I am ignored for machines and stars. Your research is important to you, the heart of you, and I have admired that about you from first we met. I must ask though, Jane Foster...” He looked at her, looked at the way her hands twitched for tools, the way her eyes skittered to the papers on her desk, the way she’d half-abandoned this conversation already. “Am I important to you?”

“Thor....”

The hesitation was its own heartbreak. “I went against my Father for you. I turned my back on my home realm for you, Jane Foster. I...chose you before that of even my brother. My kingdom. My birthright. Time and again, I chose you.” He shrugged, recalling the nonchalance in the motion from Darcy’s own. He did not feel nonchalant. He felt foolish. “And yet you hesitate to tell me that I matter. That I might even compare to your untouchable stars? Here, and now, as I stand before you, I thought once I was a star to you, but I realize I was never more than a ladder that you might reach them. I gave you the stars, and you had little more need of me.”
“I love you,” Jane said, in lieu of anything else.

Thor thought it might be true like he thought he loved her. It just...didn’t feel like enough. Love was well and grande, but it did few favors, he had long learned. He loved Loki, after all. He loved his father. He loved Asgard. “Like you loved Darcy?” Jane blanched. “With love like that, my Jane, who needs enemies?”

“You don’t get it....”

“You’ve scarcely made time for me since my return. Last night you would have come to bed with me, to open the skies for your research.” The sting, the insult, had not faded. “Will I always be a means to the stars to you, Jane? Or was your affection only ever for what I am? Not who I am?” He is star born, as much a mystery as any of her constellations. “I thought you mourned my absence, but I think perhaps they are convenient. Am I a convenient lover, Jane? Am I any lover at all, anymore?”

“Thor...” Her voice, small and hurt, grated on his ears. She denied nothing, could not even muster up a half lie. “Where’s this coming from?”

“If still, you do not know, I do not think we are well suited.”

Jane blinked at him. “You’re breaking up with me? Over Darcy?”

“I am ending our relationship on grounds that we desire different things in life.” He paused and looked up at the sky, bright and blue, overhead. No one prayed to him and his anymore, no one worthy of the Aesir. Sometimes--sometimes he thought he felt a flutter of...of someone, but Midgard had no time for Olde Gods. Jane had no time for Thor. “Although yes, your treatment of Darcy plays a part. You are not who I thought you were, Jane. People are but pawns to you.”

“It’s not personal,” Jane snapped, color in her cheeks. She stood out in stark contrast to the sterile observatory in its cool grey and white colors. “Darcy gets that. Grow up.”

Thor couldn’t help the laugh that escapes him. “You would not be the first to suggest as much. But I’ve just realized... Though I am in Aesir years far older than you...By Earth’s measure, I am not.”

“What do you mean?”
Thor was relatively young, in truth. And Jane was approaching her later thirties. Not...not old, by Earth standards, but to those with such short lifespans...she seemed worlds apart from him in a new way.

“I don’t want this,” Thor waved a hand across the observatory. “Every time we parted, I thought of nothing but you. Even in the blood of battle, I thought...soon, I could return to Jane. No sacrifice seemed too big if it meant I might be with you. To know that someone waited for me, longed for me...it warmed me when nothing else did.” It seemed foolish now, to have spent so much of himself on a woman he did not seem to know at all. Foolish and young. “And you cannot sacrifice even a minute to greet me, even after three months.”

“I only have nine weeks left here,” Jane reasoned, frowning. “When I return to New York—–”

“By the Norns, I’m not asking you to give up the bloody stars,” Thor rubbed a tired hand over his mouth. “I don’t know what I’m asking, honestly. Nothing fair. This is your life, and I knew that when I met you. You are as you have always been, and I’ll not spite you for it. Any blindness on my part is not your fault. Maybe I do need to grow up,” Thor told her, pushing open the doors. “But I'll not do it with someone who would treat their friends like dirt and their lovers like a chore.”

“Thor.” She didn’t look sad, he thought. He was sad. She looked, as she always did; tired. “I do love you.”

“Just not as much as you love all this.” He waved his hand across the observatory. “May it love you back, Jane Foster.” A sudden tiredness settled over him, a blanket made of weary realization. “If you decided you were better suited to life without a lover, would I deign so much as a carrier pigeon to make me aware? Smoke signals, perhaps? Or would you simply say nothing and let me discover my dismissal on my own.” Oh. Oh. Hurt made for a bitter pill, and Thor made for a foolish man. “Ah but I am every bit a fool as I’ve been accused, it seems.” There wasn’t anything here he could live without, and the truth of such a statement made his heartache. “I’m returning to New York.”

Jane did not look at him. “I’m sorry.”

“We are both sorry, then.” Molijer warmed in his palm. “I’m a fool, and you’re a coward and we are both very sorry indeed.”

Outside, on the deck of Jane’s observatory, Thor did not look back. He raises his hammer, ready to fly when impatience won out. “Heimdall,” he called, knowing his request was every bit an abuse of
the Bifrost. “I wish to return to New York with haste.”

The appearance of Bifrost, he decided, would be his parting gift to Jane. He could all but taste Heimdall’s amusement as he re-materialized on the roof of Stark Tower, specially equipped to receive him via the Einstein Rosen Bridge moments later.

Darcy burst through the elevators behind him as Thor took in the familiar sight of the New York Skyline. “You said tomorrow!”

“I could not wait.” he turned just in time to catch her as she launched herself into his arms. This--It made his heart lodge itself in his throat. He had missed this. A sense of home, of belonging. Home was not a place - it was a people. People who mourned his absence, and awaited his return.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Fierce is the God whose hands are bare
One flame lights a thousand fires
Strong is the God who hears the prayer
Those who kneel, ye apostle choir

Chapter Notes

This really is going to be a pretty deep character study into Thor's mind, before we get Darcy into the picture more, and Thor into Darcy more.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In New York, Thor took residence in the tower with the rest of the team. Like him, they all spent a great deal of time elsewhere. But this, at least for Thor, was home. Home; spacious quarters high in the sky, with a full view of the rapacious city. Home was—currently his shared domain for he and Jane. And so it was he spent most his time elsewhere—among what friends he could find in the tower. They were a busy people—world-saving waited for no hero, as it were. Stark, however, could usually be found at the tower, short of a situation or ego of catastrophic proportion to drive him into the outside world.

“There’s an open apartment one floor down,” Stark suggested, without Thor ever having voiced his grievance. Tony Stark was good for that—knowing. A brilliant mind, if a bit narrowed to the scope of his own world. Stark had very little interest in what laid beyond his planet. Thor thought, perhaps, that was for the better. The cosmos were not ready for Iron Man. “You know. If you weren’t feeling your current lodgings. For reasons unspecified.”

“Do you often invade the privacy of your comrades?” Thor picked up the silver ball center of Stark’s desk. Weighty, and smooth, Thor knew instinctively it was meant to conduct electricity. Perhaps—knowing Stark—Thor’s specifically. He could feel the pull in the palm of his hand and tossed it from one to the other, static crackling at his fingertips.

“Jarvis is my all seeing—and hearing—eye in the sky, Thunderpunch. He mentioned you might be in the market for a new locale.” Stark shrugged, his own gaze still cast on his machines. He was far and wide better at maintaining conversation and invention all at once, than Jane had been. “But yeah
- that got me curious enough to pull the observatory feed. *Ouch.*

Thor threw the orb higher, letting it spin as it came back down. “Janes intentions were never harmful,” he argues, although mildly.

“There's an Earth saying; the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Stark did look up at that. “Janes intentions might not have meant to cause harm. And yet - they caused harm. Darcy didn’t deserve that crap Foster pulled. It was bullshit. Defending her is bullshit. Some scientists she is - she didn’t even learn from it. Short of making you train your replacement, she pulled the same shit on you, Thor. And you didn't deserve it either.”

Thor didn’t have it in himself to deny Starks claims, but nor does he want to deride Jane - even now, on the sour end of their relationship. “In the end, our separation was as mutual as such things can be. I will take you on your offer, and relocate to a different floor. Spare any drama later upon her return.”

“Her return is contingent on her contract, which she seems intent on violating willfully left and right,” Tony shook his head. “She’s brilliant, I’ll give her that. And her work is important. But if it wasn’t’ for Darcy, I’d have cut her funding on grounds that she’s kind of a bitch. The heart of science is inherently unselfish. Stop throwing that - it’s picking up a charge.”

“Is it?” Thor has been quietly funneling static into the ball since he collected it from the desk. He’d done the same to his brother’s things when they were children. The resulting zap was little more than a bite of pain, but shocking all the same. “Curious.”

“The old stories never said you were a troll,” Stark gripes, eyeing the ball as Thor returns it to the pedestal on the desk. “I thought that was your brother's schtick.”

“Trolls weren’t common on Asgard, though the nine realms do play house to a number of species.” Thor smiles. Loki was the trickster, truly. But Thor had his own charms. “Loki was clever, yes. But I had to learn to keep up, didn’t I?”

“Keep it up elsewhere.” Stark’s already abandoned his tinkering to inspect the static ball. A wandering mind is a widened one. “Although - how long do you think the electricity will hold?”

“A few hours,” Thor mused, wary of Stark’s curiosity. “The static will be reabsorbed in the air, eventually.”
“Think it could sustain a full current?” He reaches out to the ball, hand hovering inches over the smooth metal, and Thor can see the dark hair raised on his arm. “Something we could activate remotely?”

“You’d need something non-conductive for transport and handling,” Thor replied, considering Mjolnir’s worn, wooden handle. “There are metals on Asgard that carry currents, dispelling them only on forceful impact. I could collect a sample for you if you’d like. Perhaps there’s a similar compound on Midgard.”

“Well I’m not one to look an Alien gift horse in the mouth, so I’m gonna say yes, gimme.” He pulls his hand away from the sphere. “Jarvis, let Darcy know Thor needs those new rooms. She’ll get you set up, Big Guy.”

Darcy, Thor had come to learn, was kept very busy by her new job. She seemed pleased by the constant hustle though. “I do not wish to trouble her.”

“Nonsense,” Stark waved his hand. “It’s part of her job.”

***

“No it’s not ,” Darcy argued with Tony over the holoscreen. “Tony, I’m in Chechnya right now! Chechnya! Are you seriously telling me you couldn’t take five minutes to key him into the new rooms and have the basics sent in? I am up to my ass in political affiliation forms. The one Wakanda sent came in a crate .”

Her hologram self is sitting on said crate, and it is of considerable size. Thor clears his throat, intending to release Darcy from any of Stark’s issued duties when the man waves his hand at her. “Darce’. I am literally throwing a fluff day at you. Take it. Set Pointbreak up in a new apartment. Help him get settled in. Christen the new place with of the good stuff. The forms will be there when you’re done.”

Darcy stares at him for a long moment. “I’m over five thousand miles away.”

“Sure you are,” Stark agrees, with a wry smile. “Hop on the holo, I need to do some beta testing anyway. Jarvis can transplant the room over to you. You can do your social media thing. Something on Thor’s return. Thor’s trip to IKEA. You can make him pronounce all the furniture names.”
“Stop being better at my job than me,” Darcy told him sternly, but she was smiling now. She waved her hand, and the spectre of Tony disappears from Thor's sitting room. “Well, I’m not sure how much help I can be of today. Tony forgets; the peasants actually have to work, and I’ve got an armed guard and fifteen world affiliates side-eying me right now. But we can go shopping for furniture and stuff when I get back. Or you can do it online? Sorry - Tony should have told me sooner, I’d have made better plans.”

“I do not mean to impose on more important issues.” The Lady Darcy was his first friend on Earth, even before that of Jane. She championed him like no one else did and made his transition on Midgard so much more bearable - enjoyable, even. She gave him reasons to love this planet, beyond Jane. She had the same chaotic, bright, loud energy of the city, all tied up in her tiny self. He has missed her. “But I would be glad of the company when you return.”

“I’m glad you’re glad,” Darcy snorted and slid off the crate. She was dressed in skirts today, instead of her usual pants - leggings. Her bare feet curled in the lush, woven carpets of her foreign rooms, a pair of heels tipped on their side next to her. The hologram glimmered and flickered briefly as she moved. “Since we’re going to be neighbors. My apartment’s to the left of yours if you’re coming from the main elevators. Do you want me to walk you through the security input? I can get anything you need right now delivered by this evenings. Sheets and towels and stuff. Do you want food delivered? The communal kitchen is usually fairly stocked, I don’t want to leave you hanging because Tony’s a jerk----”

“I am well, and you are busy. Worry less, Darcy. I promise I’ve never forgotten to eat.” He wasn’t one of her scientist, incapable of even the most basic care. Thor was grown - well. Fairly grown. And he’d spent his days alone, outside the comforts of his castle on Asgard. He could provide for himself, when necessary. “I’m sure Sir Jarvis can assist me in aught else. I do not mean to keep you from your duties.”

“Hey, no! I want to help! As soon as I get back - we can make a day off it. I haven’t seen you in ages.” She cast a quick glance behind her, as the light flickers across her face. “You know what? Key in your security stuff, but crash at my place until I’m back. Once your hand is registered in the system, I’ll tell Jarvis to code you into mine. Code Name Big Guy - password...Thunderstruck.” She winked. “Make yourself at home.”

Thor has spent a great deal of time in Darcy’s previous quarters, located near him and Janes. The wild nature of her home had soothed his youthful heart, and they had spent many hours on her squishy couch, watching her curious movies and idling away empty days. “I’m sure my rooms are sufficient---”

“I want you to be happy.” The earnesty in her voice, in her twilight eyes - Thor felt a little undone by it. This was what home felt like. “I know no one’s kicking around the tower right now. Your rooms are great, they’re just...They’re big and empty and white and---just. I know you don’t like to be
alone, Thor. So I’m until I’m there..."

It was true - and spoken gently like she did not care to call him out on such a soft fault. A fault that lead him to perils before, with Loki - who he had followed far and beyond too many times. With his Brothers Three - on Asgard- who he had sometimes followed a little too blindly. And Jane - who he’d followed far and beyond his welcome. Some leader he was - who followed for fear of being left behind. Who is this girl, Thor asked himself, to see into the heart of him so thoroughly. His friend, he answered himself, just as quickly. She reminded Thor of his mother, some days. He smiled. “If it isn’t any trouble.”

Her plush, pink mouth split into another grin - flashing just a hint of the gap in her teeth, something Thor knew she was shy about. “I don’t have a guest room set up, but you can sleep in my room. Use all my towels. Drink all my good tea. Oh! And brace yourself, Odinson, because I’m about to rock your world. Two words. Toaster strudels.”

***

The quarters were exactly as his previous had been, though they face a different expanse of New York City. Thor approached the small pad beside the door with an outstretched hand. “Sir Jarvis,” he called, trusting that Stark’s omnipotent advisor is, as ever, present. “How must I continue?”

“Press your palm into the activation pad, that I may scan it and accept it into the system,” Jarvis explained, his voice a soothing melody in the quiet room. “You may adjust your security parameters to suit your needs. A handscan is sufficient, but further measures are available. Voice recognition, retinal scans, bioregistry----”

“The hand shall suffice,” Thor interrupted, gently. The hand had been sufficing for some time now, unfortunately, and why should this be any different? In truth, he’d welcome any invasion at this point. He hadn’t lived alone in—quite some time. Even before Midgard, he stayed at the palace more often than not. And when he wasn’t there, he was with his battle brethren, chasing adventures across the stars. It was a daunting prospect, to have such space to himself. “I should like to add Darcy Lewis to my access manifest. Is it necessary she be present?”

“Not at all,” Jarvis accommodated him with a second screen, listing Darcy Lewis’s current access parameters. “However, further access entries are required. A designated name and voice-activated password will suffice. Do you require time to make your selection?”

Big Guy - that is what she called him. Hey Big Guy. “Set her name as...” Something - and Thor was not ready to admit he knew the heart of it - stopped him from setting her name as Little Lightning
Sister. “Lady Darcy,” he settled on instead - wishing he had something more affectionate, like hers. So much for his own cleverness. “But the password should be Mjolnir, and she must say it correctly.” Because she can, Thor knew this in his heart of hearts. She was just...as Stark put it...a bit of a troll.

“Very well.” Jarvis adjusted the security parameters, and Darcy’s face blinked away from the screen. “Would you prefer to use the separate entrances, or open access to the joining door between quarters, located in the hallway. Ms. Lewis has indicated no specific preference.”

Thor crossed the living quarters and dipped into the hallway. There was no door currently present, save for that of the bedroom, bathrooms, and closet, but given what he knows about Stark-ingenuity, it was most certainly there. “Mmhm. Does her lack of preference indicate indifference, or that she would rather me make the decision?”

“I believe it is the latter,” Jarvis admits, and so Thor selects the joining door. Like he suspected, a pathway materializes between the closet and the bathroom - knobless, but very much a door.

“You need only press your hand to the door, and it will open. Knocking is not mandatory, but perhaps encouraged,” Jarvis explained.

***

Darcy’s new apartment was not so different from her last. Bigger - and Thor supposed the upgrade came from her advanced position. Her couch was the same - the familiar, purple monstrosity that sat low to the ground and all but threatened to eat you, were you to settle too deeply into it. Darcy had explained she liked it that way - broken in, as she put it. That it was comforting, like an embrace.

Over the back was a knitted blanket made in greys and lilacs. Darcy had knitted it while Jane was looking at the stars, between entering in numbers and collecting coffee. It scratches against the skin - like so many strange Midgardian synthetic textiles did, but Thor pulled it free of the couch and wrapped it over his shoulders anyway. It laid like a mockery to his cape and made him grin.

It was not so late - perhaps seven thirty by the sun if he had to guess. But he was tired, worn weary by the day. The some few things he did own laid in boxes along the wall in his new quarters, collected in a single trip from his shared home with Jane. Darcy’s apartment was quiet and bright; merry familiarity in every inch. Her bursting bookshelves, her strange rug made of abandoned apparel (t-shirts, Darcy had explained. She’d made it herself, with t-shirts), her wild and unruly houseplants of which she had more than he remembered before, greenery spilling from their pots in healthy tendrils. He was perched on her couch, drinking in the colors and chaos for a long time, before he gave into the urge to sink back, and be eaten by the purple beast. Blanket secured around him, Thor folded himself awkwardly across the couch, head propped on the arm. From his angel, he could see the sun reaching for the Earth, panting pink and orange streaks across the empty sky.
“Jarvis,” he called when the sun had finally dipped beyond the horizon. “How far is Chechnya?”

“Five-thousand, five-hundred and eighteen miles. Estimated flight travel is approximately thirteen hours by hammer.”

And thirteen seconds by Bifrost, but Thor knew better than to abuse his privilege so swiftly again. And too - Darcy was busy. Darcy was busy doing---whatever it was Darcy did. “Jarvis - what is Darcy doing in Chechnya?” She had spoken of an armed guard.

“Peace talks.” Across the room, the holoscreen activated, and Jarvis brought up a number of articles on Chechnya. Boston Massacre. Paris Knifing. Human Rights. Russian Separatists. It raced across the wall, chased by flickering images of bloody faces, and crying children. “It is considered a relatively hostile republic of Russia - at conflict with a greater part of the world, including itself. Ms. Lewis is there to negotiate treaties on behalf of the US and with the support of the Avengers Initiative. A number of foreign representatives have also come, at her request. The Republic of Chechnya has been divided amongst themselves for some time. The potential for allies has gained favor, given the potential for political alignments are uncommon for certain parts of Russia.”

Which...Thor had been raised on the breast of politic since birth, and he knew the importance. So it was unlikely could go busting up in there because he was bored - lonely - anyways. “Is she safe?” An act of selflessness might be excused, though. If Darcy needed him.

“Though hesitant to enter into any conflict with the republic, Wakanda has sent Ms.Lewis a contingency of their finest soldiers, as well as their own representative, to protect the representative contingent. And too, Sergeant Barnes has enlisted himself as her head of security. He has some history with the country Russia. I believe the Captain has followed, as well. Given known quantities, I would calculate that Miss Lewis is under no direct threat.”

Wakandan army. Winter Soldier. And Captain America. That explained the empty halls, at least. Thor rolled over on the couch, burying his face into the plush purple cushions. He was not so self-important to admit that it was likely Darcy did not need him. He simply wanted her - company. Friendship. Presence. “Very well, Jarvis. Thank you.”

“You are most welcome, sir. Will that be all?”

“It will.” He closed his eyes, and let himself sleep.

****
Darkness had eaten a greater part of the sky when Thor woke. The twitching, black, cat-shaped clock on Darcy's wall told him it was half-eleven. He collected Mjolnir from his rooms and made his way to the service elevator to the roof.

The wind pulled at his hair, making knots he'd gripe about later, but it was cool and crisp and clean. Cold, perhaps, in the latter days of Midgard January, but Thor did not feel it, even with the last vestiges of snow fell like stardust around him. He stood on the ledge and started down at the skyfogged streets, nighttime New York lit up like Yule logs, glinting and twinkling as bright as the stars above.

“Darcy mentioned I might find you on the roof. Cave dwelling isn’t for everyone.” Stark sidled up to his left, a woolen coat pulled high around his face. “Thinking about jumping?”

Thor palmed the hammer, letting it slip in his hand until his fingers caught on the worn leather strap. “Yes.” He let Mjolnir swing gently, front and back.

“Well, it is a nice night for a stroll around the skyline.” The mechanical hum of the Iron suit buzzed in perfect harmony with the whistling winds as Stark wrapped himself in crimson ingenuity and gold bravado. “Let’s do this, Static X.”

_Darcy mentioned I might find you on the roof_. Thor mulled over the words as Stark launched from the ledge. Tony had come because Darcy had mentioned...something. Shame wriggled, a yellow-bellied serpent, but perhaps---perhaps this was simply what family did. Eyes on the sky, where Tony was little more than a brilliant comet crossing the sky - Thor stepped off the ledge, Mjolnir pulling toward the horizon.

***

Thor left Tony in the lab in the wee hours of the morning, firey Midgardian spirits burning brightly in both their bellies. They hadn’t parted upon their return, and he thought perhaps Tony was lonely too when he welcomed him to loiter in the labs. They’d toyed with his strange metal ball, letting it collect the static from Thor’s fingertips, and disperse against whatever they could hit half-inebriated. Tony had thrown it at Thor once, watching it crackle and burst against his armor. Non-conductive, Thor had explained, for all that it was metal. Tony had rambled about the absence of free electrons, ball forgotten as his hands scrambled for tools and notepads. He’d let the man poke and prod at his chest piece, cutting a minute sample from the inside plaquet for testing .
He used Darcy’s front door to return -bypassing his own quarters entirely to hang his cape on the hook in Darcy’s coat closet and leave his hammer on squat, round end table. The couch was as he left it, scratchy afghan in a puddle on the far cushion, coffee table pushed out to make room for his legs. He bypassed the living quarters and slipped into Darcy’s room. Here, he had never been. Had never had a reason too. It was as the rest of Darcy’s life seemed to be, a tangle of color and cohesive chaos. Taking a seat on the edge of the bed - which dipped threateningly under his weight- he kicked off his boots and lined them up neatly at the foot of the mattress. Her comforter was seafoam green, with a pale bluebird pattern that didn’t at all match the coral pink of her walls but somehow suited all the same. He didn’t bother to pull back the covers, just unfolded himself across the mattress, feet hanging off the end. Tiny Midgard was a world made to stroke his ego, but he could do without the ever-present dollhouse furniture.

Sleep did not come - not at once. Thor stared instead at the high ceilings of the room, the sloping beams Darcy had strung tiny, twinkling lights from in a rainbow of colors. They reminded him of the Bifrost, as they reached across the room. When he’d been little, and sleep eluded, his mother would sit at his bedside and brush her fingertips over the slope of his nose, and sing Aesir hymns in the Olde Tongue.

_Fierce is the God whose hands are bare_  
_One flame lights a thousand fires_  
_Strong is the God who hears the prayer_  
_Those who kneel, ye apostle choir_  

_Wise is the God, whose knows the fall_  
_When a single ripple be only the start_  
_Great is the God who heeds the call_  
_The beating of a Temple Heart_  

He tapped his finger on his sternum, like his mother had so long ago - and felt it like a second heartbeat, like the Gods of ye olden times, who followed the call of the supplicant’s song. No one prayed to the Olde Gods anymore, no one prayed to Thor. Still - there were times when he was certain he could feel the beating of a heart beneath his, like a tandem war call, sowing hope within him that he was a worthy cause and something to believe in. But when the dust settled and the world’s kept spinning, Thor was always forced to acknowledge it was no more than a childish dream, something to sooth him in the frey. The mortals took no knee in supplication now, not even for the blessings of the Gods. They didn’t need too - they had found their own way to ensure a harvest or a healthy birth. They had become their own Gods, and cast Thor and his ken aside.
He dreamed that night, in the curl of softly worn cotton bedclothes that smelled familiar and foreign all the same. He dreamed of a field of pale purple flowers, set at the foot of a gleaming black mountain that stretched up and up into an endless sky of grey.

“What is this place?” Thor asked Darcy, who had braided him a chain of blossoms.

Wind from nowhere pulled at the gauzy film that made her dress. Through the thin muslin, he could see the shape of her bare body and felt his heart race a double beat. She held up her flowers in both her pale hands and smiled wide enough to bare her teeth. Thor knelt before her so that she could reach, and Darcy laid the flower crown atop his head with the same gravity as Thor had felt when his father Odin had dubbed him the Crowned Prince of Asgard. He did not rise, but kept his pose and stared at her bared feet, toes ghostly pale in stark contrast to the verdant green of the grass below them.

“The Fields of Asphodel,” Darcy said, at last, cupping his chin and pulling his head up to meet her gaze. They were close enough, he could feel the sweet breath of her lungs against his face. She looked smaller now, but not younger - standing where he knelt, and eye to eye. “It’s from Greek Mythos. A different part of the Underworld, where those who lived lives neither good nor bad go after death. Ordinary people.”

“Not heroes?” Thor had not given a great deal of thought to where ordinary people went upon death. The Heroes of Asgard went to Valhalla - the City of Fallen Soldiers and he had always assumed it was his path.

Darcy smiled and kissed his mouth, the plush press of her lips to his achingly tender. “Not heroes,” she agreed and turned to ash before him.

***

Thor woke with a start, a gasping choked cry strangling itself up and out of his throat. He was tangled in Darcy’s blankets, fully dressed and too hot. Hard- he was hard, cock straining up against his fastened denim. His hands fumbled as he pushed open the button, and he could not breathe for the spinning of his head. Thor closed his eyes, and the pale purple of his eyelids seemed new to him, nothing like the comforting prelude to sleep. He ground the heel of his hand against his cock and hissed, wondering what dream spirit had teased him so and left him woke, and wanting.

Closing his fingers around himself, he imagined different hands, cold against his heated flesh. Soft palms, silk against him, Thin, delicate fingers too small to encompass him, going tight as he guides them with his own. Desire had it’s own beat, thrumming in his balls, making the world grow gauzy
in its heat wave. He missed touch - any touch at all, but most the press of a woman's body against his own, the supple, giving flesh of spread thighs, the sunset pink of a wanting cunt, the salt of desires’ sweat on his tongue, nails biting into his flesh, the bow of curved bodies, the clench---

He came, spectacularly, across his own chest, come spattering into his beard, thinking of no one particular at all. But all the same, he came spectacularly in Darcy’s bed, all alone into his fist. The hand not currently cupping his tender balls, cupped instead, his face. Thor breathed out hard, and wondered not for the first time - what on Midgard was wrong with him?

Chapter End Notes

this fic is equivalent of a crockpot, as far as burns go
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

seven thousand words and some of them are even happy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thor took to New York in his plain clothes and found both some measure of comfort and disturbance at how few people knew his face. He was a Prince across the stars, but he was not their prince. Thor was a hero - but not like this. Without his cape and hammer, they expected nothing of him. They looked to him for nothing, they held him accountable for nothing. The burden of responsibility did not weigh his shoulders down so heavily, and it was...freeing, in a sense, but he’d never been anything but a Prince and a God and a Hero, and the absence within him ached. Even in denim, on the stained sidewalks of a calm street - the call to righteousness still beckoned him. He was never truly free of responsibility, for it was his own beating heart that leads him to the life. But maybe in denim, on the stained sidewalk of a calm street, he could accept the moment of respite that ambiguity offered him.

Midgard did not need him.

The respite did not come, though Midgard did not need him. Perhaps that was the sensation that thrummed beneath his leading, beating, bereft heart. Not heartache or homesickness, but void where purpose once dwelled. Who is he, beyond the Son of Odin, Prince to the Throne on Asgard, leader of the Nine Realms and Thor, Hero to All. Without his throne and crown, hammer and cape...what be left to claim the throne of his soul?

***

When he went in search of furnishings, he came home instead with a small plant in a pale, palm-sized, yellow pot carved with lattice stripes of white. It was fern of sorts, the woman at the kiosk had explained. The tips of the curling tendrils were a smokey blue, and they looped and hugged Thor’s fingertips where he pet them. He’d always had a way with plants, found comfort in the forest among the trees when he was a small boy. He set the curious fern on his kitchen counter, and the butter yellow pot stood out in grating juxtaposition the cool grey and whites of the cabinets and counters. It didn’t look at peace among the steel and glass, and so he collected it back into his arms and carried it to Darcy’s instead.

She had plants. Darcy had carved out her own slice of a New York Garden inside her apartment, and it spilled from room to room and hung over her glass domed balcony in verdant, wispy waves. They
dangled from the ceiling in colorful, stringed nets, and they cluttered every available surface, in every available room. Thor watered them and tucked the fern under the branches of an aging ficus tree near the balcony door where it could curl into the shade or reach for the sun as it pleased.

There were no goddamn beds in New York for Thor, and so instead he crawled once more into Darcy’s, feet hanging off the edge. The pale blue bird pattern followed him beyond the veil of sleep and he dreamed of smokey blue feathers falling from the sky like rain. They dissolved in his palm like they were made of spun sugar, but the color remained, dripping through his fingertips an inky, dark oil spill.

“What would you do if you couldn’t fly?” Darcy asked, biting the end off a sugar-feather, candy crystals turning white on her mouth and Thor was momentarily distracted by the vermillion pink of her bitten lips. Her dress was as last time - a gauzy pale robe that hung loosely from her curves, and she had a crown of curling ferns atop her head that tangled and hugged her mess of loose hair. The dark curls seemed nothing more than impossible shadows against the crisp white linens of his bed.

"What would you do?"

Why do I dream of you, Thor wanted to ask, but Dream Darcy asked questions and compelled answers. The four-poster bed with curtains the color of a violent star shine sky was dusted in dark feathers, and they fell away with sugar-spun sweetness, leaving nothing at all beneath them both but stretches and stretches of starting space. “Fall,” Thor said, as the blanket of their galaxy moved to smother them. Darcy took his hand, and the inky sugar spill bled from his fingers to hers until they both were as dark as a midnight sky. The world ate them up into a black hole void of nothing and crystalline sugar spun starting space.

***

“I should like to make my bed,” Thor told Tony, over lunch later in the week. They were on the roof again, sitting on the edge, their feet dangling over miniscule stretches of New York streets. Tony had removed a large part of the partition to make access to the edge far simpler.

“I pay people to do that for me.”

“Indeed. But I thought perhaps I’d build the frame.” Thor was aware that there were servants -maid staff, Darcy had corrected - employed throughout the tower, but he had never so much as seen evidence of one. “Where would one go for very large, very solid trees?”

Tony chewed his falafel for a long moment. “I can buy you a bed, my guy.”
A generous friend; Tony gave freely with all that he had. Thor accepted the generosity when his
pride allowed, for he thought perhaps Tony carried much of his own self-value in the act of giving.
It was only - well. Thor was a great deal wealthier. Things that carried value on Midgard were far
more plentiful on Asgard. Diamonds. Gold. Other menial, material wealth. He limited his exchange
of such things, however, as he knew introducing too much could affect the Midgardian economics
system too greatly. Such things should be done over stretches of time. Still. He could buy his own
bed, was he inclined.

“A kind offer,” he explained, patting Stark heartily on the back, though not so heartily as to send him
over the edge. “However - I would enjoy building my own if such things were amenable. I should
like to build something tailored specifically to my needs.”

“Woodworking a skill of yours, Thunder Down Under?” Tony took another bite of his falafel,
before holding the remains out for Thor. “You take shop in high school first period like the rest of
us? Morning wood?”

Riches he may possess, Thor did not turn down offerings of food. It was unseemly of a God to
refuse an offer made with a pure heart, and too - he was a growing boy. “Yes,” he told Tony,
finishing the offer in two neat bites. “Something like that. I built a great many things on Asgard.
When I wasn’t much younger, my mother sent me to the villages for a season, to build homes for
those in need. I found the process of choosing trees who promised the greatest longevity very
soothing.”

“Philanthropy, tree whispering and carpentry, oooohkay.” Tony made a scoffing sound, and Thor
looked at him in question. “Jesus Christ. You’re like fucking Shrek, aren’t you? You have layers.
We all thought you were just a big dumb meathead - but you’re totally an ogre.”

Thor---didn’t entirely understand that reference. But he understood Tony’s meaning. “You believed
me to be unintelligent because I struggled with your technology, yes?”

“Doorknobs elude you,” Tony said flatly. “Windows! Closed windows. Do you know how many
I’ve had to replace because you just----walk through them.”

Ah. Yes. Glass windows were a constant, primitive bafflement for him. Thor understood the
necessity now, but surely - surely there was a better way than invisible but entirely tangible shielding.
How such a moderately advanced world could tolerate glass windows was beyond him. “Such
things do not exist on Asgard.”

“Windows? You don’t have windows?” Tony narrowed his eyes. “I’m calling shenanigans.”
“Glass windows, friend. Such things - such insubstantial, tangible materials...it does not serve as a window well if it should break so easily. On Asgard, glass is saved for decoratives. Glassworks is considered more of an artistry than something functional. There are stained-glass works in the palace, and my mother had a tiara made of glass. I think glass is the preferred vessel for holy waters and oils among the temples but beyond that... Not windows. Our windows are shielded with...hm. I suppose the current Earth equivalent is some sort of ray. An invisible force field that shields the interior from the elements and such. You use such things on the Tower, though on a far larger scale.”

Tony’s narrowed gaze widened significantly, and he blinked up at Thor wildly. “You use forcefield technology on each and every individual window?”

Thor nodded solemnly. “Aye - some better than others. It is old technology. Cheaply done, by all accounts. I forget when I’m here. You keep your glass very clean,” he added. The ghost-maids of Stark Tower really were fantastic at their job.

Tony fell silent for a long moment, and the clouds above resisted the turn of the Earth. “You don’t understand doorknobs because you don’t use doorknobs either,” Tony turned his whole body to Thor, mouth spreading into something thin, and thoughtful. “You don’t understand Earth tech - not because it’s too advanced, but because ---”

“It’s old,” Thor supplied, gently. “Some so old, it is behind my generation. I genuinely did not comprehend the purpose of a door knob when I arrived here. I was raised to understand that if a door did not open to you-you were not permitted entrance. That was that.” And as Prince, there were few doors that did not grant Thor entrance. Door knobs---were stupid. A needless step to entering and leaving any place. A door should just know its purpose, without one needing to navigate a knob that it might understand what is expected of it.

“But! But!” Tony sputtered and raked an indignant hand through his hair. “How do the doors know who can’t enter? Is it biological like ours? Is it--- No--- don’t answer that. Do you have internet on Asgard? What’s the internet equivalent? Do you have--- No---No don’t answer that. I’ll get you a branch from a California Redwood, tools and a workspace if you just... don’t answer anything I ask you.”

“Rightly done. Perhaps one day I’ll take you there,” Thor said instead. Below them, birds swooped and squawked. A four-poster bed, like the one in his childhood room back home, perhaps. With canopies made of the finespun nova gossamer his mother favored. “Will a single branch of this redwood suffice?”
“Should do.” Tony pushed up from the edge with a quiet groan - the aches of middle age reaching their peak in the evening hours. Tony was upon his Autumnning hour, Thor thought, with a fierce edge of sadness. “Darce’ should be home tomorrow. You can talk to her about workspace and tools and stuff.”

“Perhaps this roof would be best” Thor looked over his shoulder across the vacant space. “I would prefer to petrify the wood prior to building.”

Tony stared at him for a long moment, mouth pursed to the side. “Yeah. Okay.”

Darcy flew in the following day in a whirl of color and noise, in the hours where night and day blurred. Part of the contingent had followed her to New York for what Sir Jarvis had explained was to be an educational retreat for representatives of the Avengers Initiative Ambassador International Association.

“The AIAIA.” Midgardians were terribly fond of their acronyms.

“That is correct,” Jarvis affirmed.

Rows of black cars parked in a tidy line in the below-ground carport of Stark Towers. Thor was hardly alone in greeting her. A bleary-eyed Tony was there with a bright-eyed Pepper, Banner, and Coulson, and a number of people Thor had yet to learn as well. People, perhaps, not for Darcy at all, but Thor couldn’t fathom it. He watched as the Captain helped Darcy from the car, the ever-grim specter of Sergeant Barns following behind. Representatives poured from the other cars in small groups, and the good Lady Pepper commanded them all with a clear and firm voice.

Thor did not interrupt, as Darcy shared words with Pepper. “They have their room manifests, and Happy already confirmed security for floors forty and forty-one. I spoke with the cafeteria downstairs and set them all up with accounts. Anything else, they can foot themselves. They know they aren’t required to stay in the Tower, but I’ve had them all sign-off on any injuries that might occur should they leave outside prescheduled touring hours. Am I forgetting anything?”

“To breathe maybe,” Pepper told Darcy, dryly. “Darling, take a break. You’ve done your job. This parts mine.”

“But it’s still part of the Avengers Ambassador----”
“It’s being hosted by Stark Industries,” Pepper plucked the stack of papers from Darcy’s arms. “Which is me. Take a break. Don’t you have plans with Thor, anyway?”

“Thor?” Darcy’s gaze shot past Pepper and her people, to Thor. The grin that spread across her face was impossibly infectious. He watched with great amusement as she kicked off her shoes and darted forward, bracing himself the force of her tiny impact. “Big guy! Look at you. You look...Bigger.”

Big Guy. Big Guy. But what did he call her? “Little girl,” he said in kind, his voice a scant too rough for the public. Little Girl --- what utter foolishness. In all the stars, could he be spared a moment of cleverness? Or were the blessings bankrupt on Loki, where they failed him in moral availability and muscle mass? Little Girl? Fuck. ‘I suppose you’ll need carrying. It is a long way to your quarters.”

“You’re reading my mind,” Darcy muttered, hooking her chin over his shoulder. Her dark curls tickled his face and tangled in his beard, as he slipped his hands below the sweet, generous curve of her thighs. She sighed against him, body going limp in his arms. “Buddy - you are a godsend. In the literal sense.”

The good Captain came to stand beside them. He had Darcy’s pale rose print luggage tucked under his arm. “You know I’d have carried you, Darce’,” he offered with a laugh.

Darcy didn’t so much look up from her burrow into Thor’s throat, even as she spoke with a muffled, but obvious smile. “Yeah, but you get weird about where to put your hands. Thor just grabs whatever he can get a grip on, he doesn’t care where they end up. See? He’s like three inches from reaching second base right now. We covered what that meant right? I feel like we definitely covered that on Pop Culture night.”

“Yes,” both Thor, and Steve replied in kind. Steve had given Thor a little leather book to write down the more confusing Midgardian Colloquialisms, and it had proven most helpful.

Though it was true he did tend to grab onto whatever felt solid, that was more to avoid dropping her than aught else Thor cared a great deal actually. Carefully, he slid his left hand to a more....centrally located position below her thighs and held his right out for Darcy’s bag. “You are no doubt weathered by your travels. I shall see Ms.Lewis to her quarters.” Steve shared a look with Barnes, short and familiar. Thor knew the nature of such looks - battle brothers had their own language and a lot could be said in a simple glance. “Nothing shall befall her under my care, friends. By my hammer, I would not allow it.”

“Will you be staying with her while the Contingent is in the tower?” Barnes asked, brow furrowed. “I recommend a 24-hour surveillance. I told her I’d prefer if one of us stay with her, but she----”
“I will,” Thor agreed quickly when Darcy bit him. The heat of her tongue wet against his neck was shocking, jarring, in the burgeoning spring air of the twilight hour. “I will. I---our quarters share a door. My standing sentry makes the most sense. Better that you be available elsewhere,” he added quickly when Darcy made to bite him again. “Your skills in concealed surveillance surely trump my own.”

“Thor does....stand out in a crowd,” Steve agreed, nodding minutely at Barnes.

“Acceptable.” Barnes took the suitcase from the Captain and held it in both his incongruous arms. “This will need a second sweep. I'll deliver it to your rooms myself when it’s cleared.”

“You just wanna touch up on my panties.” Darcy’s breath was cool against the heated, damp skin of his throat. “Jokes on you - I didn’t pack any.”

When it seemed that only Darcy would be retiring to the penthouse in that moment, Thor made for the elevators. The ambassadors would be serviced by another elevator, that traveled to separate guest suites several floors below the Avengers. The soft, even rhythm of her breath called the hour like a clock - bedtime.

She did not wake, not even when he pressed his palm to the bioscanner beside her door or pulled off her shoes in the foyer. Sir Jarvis dimmed the lights and locked the door and Thor wondered somewhat absently if Stark had asked that he check in on Darcy, or if perhaps Sir Jarvis had simply held his own desire too.

Darcy’s spacious apartment was the usual standard of impeccable chaos, though his presence was painfully obvious in the little details. He’d folded her purple blanket in a triangle, and hung it over the arm of her settee. The cactus shaped mug he’d drank coffee from that morning sat, clean, beside the sink. In the closet beside the door, hung his cape. At the foot of Darcy’s bed, laid his boots in a neat row where he’d deposited them the previous night. His hammer took up residence on the sideboard, beside the bowl where Darcy kept spare keys and matchbooks and an array of cell phone chargers. A second towel hung in her ensuite, twice the size of hers and comically red. In the true spirit of her offer, he had indeed made himself home and felt it for the first time since leaving Norway. Thor hoped when she woke, she wouldn’t mind.

Cradling her body against his own, he pulled back her bluebird coverlet with one hand and eased her down between the sheets. “M’mn not asleep,” she grumbled, failing to uncurl herself from him so that he was forced to kneel beside the bed, that he not topple over entirely and crush her. He braced one hand against the headboard, holding his weight, while the other remained trapped beneath her. “You’re asleep.”
“Given my dreams as of late, I would not be surprised.” With the press of her soft body against his own and the brush of her mouth painting shivers across his jaw - yes it did seem that Thor was dreaming. “You’ll have to let go if I am to leave you to your rest.”

Darcy curled her arms harder around him and nuzzled against his scruffy cheek. “Noooo. Don’t leave. I’m awake. I’m totally awake. We were gonna--- we had plans - “

“It’s half past four in the morning.” The sun would fight for its throne in the sky in little more than an hour. “Sleep, Little Girl.”

Funny that the name should sound less strange without the company of an audience. *Little Girl.* She was - so little, and so young for all that she was fierce and wise.

“Fine but--can you hang out until I fall asleep?” The iron bar of her arms released him, and she sank back into the mountain of pillows, her face but a scant few inches from her own. “I’ve spent like---weeks now, surrounded by people all the fucking time, never a goddamn minute to myself. If it wasn’t ambassadors, it was Bucky and when it wasn’t Bucky, it was fucking Steve and don’t get me wrong - I love them both. But I don’t want to see any of their faces for a week. I need like, intense, personal me time.” Absently, she picked up a fallen lock of Thor’s blond hair and twirled it around her finger. “I just don’t want to do it alone, if that makes sense. I missed home like crazy, you know. But I don’t want to be home alone.”

“Home is not a place,” Thor recited, words from a youth fondly remembered, “home is a people.”

Darcy hummed, lashes fluttering against her porcelain cheeks. “Hmm. That’s nice. Where’d you hear that?”

“My father use to say it.” Thor wondered now if such words were their own foreshadowing. Loki, born on Jotunheim, but raised on Asgard. Thor had not truly understood the meaning until he found his place on Midgard.

Darcy scooted over on the bed and patted the pale linens. “Come on, come on. Tell me what you did while I was gone.”

Moped, mostly. Muddled through existential dread and internal crisis. Blew things up with Stark. Dreamed about Darcy’s naked body. Spilled into his own fist on this very bed. “I bought a fern.”
“Aww, I love ferns.” She turned to her side, and the swell of her breast beneath her shirt laid heavy against his bicep. “What else?”

He watched nimble fingers toy with his hair, braiding the pale tendrils into her own, dark curls - night and day, by all accounts. But they were not so different, Darcy and Thor. Kindred souls. Or at least, Thor hoped to be the kind of person Darcy was. “Surely you’d rather tell me about your trip?”

“I really don’t.” Darcy made a face, and flopped back on the bed, the tips of their hair still braided. Hers was longer, with more give, and so Thor shifted to accommodate. “I mean, I will! When it’s exciting to talk about again. But mostly - I’m tired of it. I don’t know. Weary, I guess. There’s still so much to do, I don’t feel like I’ve accomplished anything at all except new people I don’t know are mad at me. Peace talks. Who knew they’d be so stressful?”

“Make friends of your enemies enemy; that seems to be the nature of an alliance, and too, no way to make friends.” Thor snorted. “I have sat in on my father's council enough times that perhaps I could have warned you.”

“Ah - true. You’re technically a foreign dignitary, aren’t you? Maybe you should come to the Ambassador’s conference - represent Asgard.”

“As Prince, I have the potential to represent all realms.” The Council of 9 would certainly approve of him throwing around his diplomatic weight. “If it would further your cause, I would be happy to assist.”

Curling her small palms over the curve of his bicep, she flicked absently at the seam in his shirt. “Asgardian Prince of All Things Space and Shit? Uh - yeah. I can see how having you back me could be beneficial. As a scare tactic if nothing else. Pretty sure the whole world saw you rip space robots in half with your bare hands while being projected from the sky at eighty miles an hour.”

“Ah.” Thor laid his head down on their shared pillow and settled into the bed deeper. “It is muscle you are in need of? I’m good for that.” That was easy - being the strong hand behind a sharp mind. Would that he could be both, of course.

“Only always,” Darcy huffed. She had her head propped in her other palm, on a bent elbow. “But yeah. You’re one of the Avengers, so you’re already muscle. But you also have a secondary presence as Prince of Asgard, and I could probably use your...conciliatory appeal.”
“Conciliatory.” Thor couldn’t help the furrow in his brow as he frowned down at her. “Darcy - no one has ever accused me of being especially tactful.”

“Yeah but everything you say with that unexpectedly European accent - it all sounds so nice.” She winked at him. “But I mean - you’re a Prince on the proverbial battlefield. You’re a future King out here, making the galaxy a better place. I think that would stand for a fantastic example of how other people should run their realms. You don’t just care about Asgard - I mean, you're going to protect all nine realms. That’s so wildly unselfish, compared to Midgard alone.”

Thor fell silent for a long moment. “I cannot say I stand to protect the nine realms, except maybe from each other. There is much discord. Jotunheim proved that. There will always be waring between my people. There will always be violence. I can only hope to keep them from tearing us apart from the inside out.”

“Yeah,” Darcy breathed. “Yes. That. That’s what I’m trying to do. I am wildly out of my element here. I mean, I’m twenty-four, Thor. I just barely finished my degree. My internship had nothing to do with anything relevant to me, and if I were anyone else, I’d be slumming it pushing pamphlets for some politician I didn’t even support but I’m——” She looked at him, with wide, worried eyes. “I’m mending fences over land-mines and I’m scared.” She rubbed at the corner of her eye and bit at her full bottom lip. “I’m scared because it’s going well, and the better it goes the more people want me dead, it seems. It’s oddly counter-productive.”

Thor’s heart seized in his chest, aching the same way it did when Tony winced on a stretch. Midgardians, his beautiful, lively Midgardians - they were so short lived. So...frail, even for all their strength. “I will help you,” Thor vowed to her. “Anything you need, Darcy.”

“Well right now I need the threatening potential for white-light smackdown, but also like --- Prince Odinson, foreign dignitary heavily invested in the peace talks. Royal Thor and Avengers Thor.”

“Strange to me, that they should be different.” Had that not been what he’d muddled on, while she was gone? “Such things become tedious. Thor, God of Thunder. Thor of the Avengers. Thor, Son of Odin, Crowned Prince on Asgard. Thor, future Ruler of the Nine Realms.”

“So many capital letters in there.” She patted his arm. “It’s different for you, I suppose. They’re not aliases or alter egos - it’s not like Dr.Banner and Hulk. It’s not even like Tony Stark and Iron Man; like Tony is always Iron Man, but he can step away from it. You are all those things, all the time. They’re all Thor.”
“Are they?” He didn't mean for the question to escape him, and dwell among the land of living thoughts. He stared at her ceiling to avoid her gaze. “Sometimes I think none of them are, and that without them, I’d be nothing too.”

Darcy turned her eyes to the ceiling too, perhaps to spare him. “I don’t know what you mean. I mean - you’re always Thor.”

“Yes.” But what did that mean? “Perhaps like you, I feel out of my element. Unprepared. Without my hammer, my cape or my crown....what is left? Even without threat, there’s no surety that those things should remain.”

“Mmm. We’ve reached reciprocal Four AM thoughts. They happen to be my specialty. Your stuff - stuff like that, it doesn’t define you. Without a crown, or a cape or a hammer...”

“They don’t define me, but they do define the titles and without such things, I am Thor the Nothing? The crown must be mine, for me to claim myself as Prince of Asgard. And we have seen---- Darcy, you have seen it with your own eyes...I am nothing without my hammer. I am no Avenger.”

“Hey! The shield doesn’t make Steve the Cap, and the suit doesn’t turn Tony into Iron Man. The toys are cool and all, but it’s the guts to pick them up and use them that make super heroes. Thor.” Her tiny palm curled over his cheek and tipped his face to hers. “You okay? This is pretty deep. Kind of on par with me saying I’m afraid I’m about to sew deeper discord between seven nations. You alright?”

_SELFISH_. Loki’s voice crept in like a shadow cat, to perch on his shoulder and whisper such truths. Selfish. It was selfish of him to spoil her homecoming and greet her with woes. “My apologies, Darcy. I---.”

“Nah, dude. Deep is fine. Deep is perfect for this time of morning-night and makes me feel better for dumping on you. It’s what we do, you know. That’s friends. Family. If you can’t talk to them, who can you talk too?” Darcy grinned at him, dimples soft in her cheeks. “I just want to make sure everything is okay. Like - is this normal navel-gazing, or something dire. Like did you find out you’re adopted, or are aliens planning another invasion...”

“No.” And so he was selfish and self-centered. His problems were hypotheticals based on nothing more than the fear of inadequacy, most likely. Darcy’s problems were more pressing. More dire. More now.
She did not take her hand away but scritched at the week’s old scruff decorating his cheek. He hasn’t shaved since she left, and it showed. “I could tell you a thousand times over that you’re Thor, regardless of the crown you wear, or the hammer you hold, but you won’t believe me.”

Would that he could believe her, but his damnable mind would not allow it. “Tangible promises rarely remain.” Like the weight of her breast against his chest or the press of her palm to his face - they too would crumble.

“That’s fine. That’s true.” She cupped his chin and shook him gently once. “But should you lose the crown - you’re still the son of a King. And should your hammer crumble in your hand one day - well? Banner is just as much a part of the Avengers as the Hulk. So if you couldn’t bring the electric smackdown, I doubt they’ll kick you out of the club. You’re still pretty fierce in hand to hand combat, and I’m sure Tony would make you something. Shit - we could get you a really big taser. Plus, you’re super smart. You’re eons ahead of us all.”

Darcy had never thought Thor was stupid. “I suppose.”

“Molijer is not one of Earth’s Mightiest Heros, and your crown is not the Prince of Asgard.” She slapped his cheek and huffed heavily. “I can see you’re still not buying what I’m selling.”

“You are right, of course---”

“It’s okay if you don’t. You can’t make yourself.” She laid her palm over his mouth and shushed him. “Say you are right - and one day, you find yourself crownless, and hammerless.” Thor flinched. “No faith in tangible promises, as you said. Maybe it’s better not to put all your stock into the things that can be taken away. We aren’t what we have. So maybe put less pressure on yourself to be Prince Odinson or our might smackdown Your worth isn’t there. Maybe consider the other.”

“The other what?”

“The God.” Her blue eyes seemed grey in the shadow-cast room, grey, and grave as they held his face. “They can take your throne, they can take your hammer, they can take all the nine realms from you but no one can take that from you. You’re always the God of Thunder - even if you’re nothing else. I’ve seen you call storms without the hammer, Thor. I know it’s not the same, but you’re still a God, aren’t you? You were still chosen, for the things inside you that make you Thor. That means something.”
By the Stars but she looked to mean it. Thor wanted to kiss her, in that moment, a first outside the
dreamworld. “Yes and no. Not really. No one prays to the Olde Gods anymore.” He shrugged, and
pulled her hand away from his face, her touch too much at the moment. “No one believes in us.”

“I’ll believe in you.” She tangled their fingers where they laid between them. “I guess that’ll have to
be enough, Big Guy.”

“Thank you.” Thor watched her lashes flutter closed, and let his hand remain entrapped by her tiny
one.

Moment by moment, her body fell lax beside him, and she danced along the horizon between
if you want them to believe in you, you should be a God they can believe in.”

***

“I’m not just the God of Thunder, you know.” Thor eyed the massive California Redwood branch
stretching across one of the lower garages in Tony’s workspaces. It was every bit as big as Tony had
promised.

He’d been thinking about Darcy’s word in every quiet moment. The throne, the hammer - those were
gifts of his father. But divinity chose him for the Gods. His father’s father had not been a God, after
all. Odin had been chosen, the same way Thor and Loki had. Such things were not promised by the
blood. Thor was a God by right, not name. There was some measure of heart in that, for all that
Gods were obsolete. No one prayed to the Olde Gods, but that was not why they were made Gods.
Even without faith and followers, they had duties to fulfill. Perhaps Thor would find peace in
following the calling of Divinity instead of only the paths his father laid for him.

Darcy was signing for something - the branch perhaps, that had been unloaded off the back of a
truck. “Hmm. Oh, what?”

Laying his hand on the branch, Thor hummed. “Thunder. I’m not just the God of Thunder. This
branch won’t do. I’ll need oak.”

Darcy blinked up at him. “I can’t send back a fifteen-foot log, Thor. They drove it here from
California. That’s over three-thousand miles.”
“Very well. I shall use it. But not for my bed.” Maybe a table, with the long benches the great hall favored back home. He patted the redwood once more, the thrum of life faint but steady beneath the peeling bark. Yes, a table. “I need oak.” Oak heeded his call more freely than other woods.

“I won’t be able to commission anything as big as this.” She frowned at her phone. “What kind of oak? There’s like---a lot of oak.”

“Something white.” They were white on Asgard. Great white oak trees that stretched to the sky, proud and old as time itself. “I needn’t the wood. Only the acorns. At least four.”

“You can’t use this fifteen foot of California redwood that took a full week to acquisition because the form alone was a hundred and thirty-seven pages long, but four acorns will do. Do you plan on fucking growing the tree?”

“Four of them,” Thor told her, grinning at her incredulous expression. Her body had fallen loose, clipboard hanging from her hand at her side. Not disbelief, exactly - just surprise. “And I shall use this redwood. Just not for my bed.”

She stared at him for a long moment, before nodding. Accepting, as was her way. Believing that he would, indeed, grow a tree. “Yeah - okay. Do you want to pick them yourself or...”

“That would be lovely, actually.”

Thor had visited Central Park before. The lush stretch of green in the otherwise silver city seemed nothing short a tiny oasis. Fortuitous to them - their Acorn Hunting Trip coincided perfectly with an Ambassador tour. Sergeant Barnes and the Captain followed the entourage in plain clothes, Steve acting as a casual jogger, running circles around the group, and Bucky walking a fractious, excited beast of a dog named Lolly.

Pepper took charge, instructing the group to stay between the centermost part of the park. “If you pass Strawberry Fields, you’ve gone too far. Please feel free to explore within the park, but understand that existing the predetermined areas enacts the liability clause in the forms you’ve signed. Attached to your Stark Phone is a GPS pager button that will issue a distress signal if you’re in need of help. You may also use the mapping system to find others in our party. Any questions?”

Darcy hooked her arm around his and tugged him along. “Come on, God of Other Stuff. I got
Special Dispensation to leave this part of the park.”

“Is that why you requested the Hammer?” Molijer laid a reassuring weight across his shoulder.

“I know you don’t need it to protect me, but I figured it would make you feel better. Also, Bucky.” She tugged him along, tripping once over her pale pink slippers. “Ugh - this is going to take forever. I should have worn better shoes.”

Thor pulled Molijer down from its perch, and let it swing freely in his hand. “We could fly. An aerial view would give me the best advantage in picking the fruit of strong trees.”

“Well now I know you’re just trying to finesse me with fancy words, but I’m not going to say no to flying.” She let go of his arm and took a step back. “Oh my God. How are we doing this? I’m so excited? Should I take my shoes off - these things are not secure and I’d hate to brain someone with a Kate Spade ballet flat.”

Her enthusiasm was as ever, infectious. Thor loved flying, even still, after so long. “In your bag, perhaps,” he suggested, catching her by the elbow as she toed them off.

“So like--how are we doing this, Big Guy? Piggy Back?” She pulled the strap of her bag over her neck, so it crossed her body at an angle.

On his back, she would be forced to hold herself in position, and strong she may be, Thor wouldn’t trust the strength of her arms against Molijer’s wind velocity. “Better that I hold you against me,” he explained, feeling hot on the neck at the words. “I mean, better that I hold you in place, from the front. The winds will be strong.”

“Alright, so like usual? Run and jump? She took another step back, but Thor was quicker, snatching her up around the waist with one arm and hauling her up like nothing at all. Her feet dangled, toes bumping his knees and she squealed in surprise and delight.

“Unnecessarily,” he managed to say without a single sputter, as she wrapped her plush thighs around his hips, and wriggled herself in place. Thor’s hand moved of its own will, to cup her round bottom, and secure her in place - as professionally as possible with one’s hand on someone’s ass. “Does this work?”
“Mmm. Little harder,” Darcy suggested, and Thor didn’t quite catch the twinkle in her eye until he was crushing her harder against him, fingers biting into the give of her body. “Oh yeah. It’s working for me, Big Guy.”

“You’re a menace,” Thor laughed, but he held her too-hard all the same. She would bruise, he thought; the very notion of it made his heart race in his chest. She was---she was a flirt. Darcy was a flirt without prejudice and Thor was not special to find himself on the end of her attentions. His mind knew that. His body still stirred at the way she gave to him, how she genuinely seemed to like the breathless crush of their bodies.

It had been some time since he laid with a woman, and longer since he laid one out beneath him. Darcy was - Darcy was - Well. Whatever she was, she was his friend. And she deserved more than his wandering hands and disrespectful thoughts. She deserved more than to be cast as the second choice. In dreams--- in dreams, it was different. In dreams, he seemed to worship her. And too - he couldn’t control his dreams.

He cleared his throat and did not allow himself to look down the loose front of her flowery dress. “Shall we?” He asked, raising Molijer.

***

A dream. It was a dream. The verdant stretches of New York greenery were surely not so vibrant. The cloudless, cerulean skies did not stretch so far. Darcy’s body against his own was not so damnably hot. Her ass would not give to his palm so perfectly - or rather, he had no idea if it would or not, because he’d never gripped her like this.

Perhaps it was a nightmare.

She had her head tipped back, the long pale column of her throat exposed. Her dark hair wrapped and twisted with the wind and she looked...more beautiful than Thor could recall seeing on any single face. Perhaps it was biased, for this moment was his alone. He was the only one who could give this to Darcy. Her wind-bitten cheeks were pink and bright, and her smile was wide enough to show the gap in her teeth - a flaw she rarely shared. Thor watched her instead of the sky, even when her eyes opened, and she watched him back.

“This is amazing!” The wind stole most of her voice, but Thor still heard. “This is - Thor this is incredible.”
Jane had been terrified on the few occasions they’d been forced to travel via Hammer, and that was well and just. It could be frightening. She’d had no control over the situation, and Jane had never managed well without control. Darcy though. Darcy did not seem to mind, and he wished so bloody terribly that he could stop comparing them.

Without warning, Thor flipped them, and Darcy shrieked, bare thighs locking tighter against him. Her dress ruffled in the wind, caught beneath his palm. He was painfully hard and careful to hold her high on his belly lest he forget himself and does something like grind against her, but the heat of her cunt against him even through her panties, and his shirt was too--- surely he was dreaming. She laughed brightly, fingers curling into his cape. “This isn’t how I imagined riding you, Big Guy, but I don’t hate it”

Thor closed his eyes, and willed himself not to disagree - he had considered this scenario time and again - long before meeting Darcy and a fair few times after. He’d never--- not in the sky. He’d never found a woman willing to try.

He must be dreaming. He must.

“How are you gonna find a good tree, if you’re facing the wrong way and your eyes are closed, Big Guy?”

“Pick me a good one, Little Girl,” he asked of her, fearful that he would wake if he opened his eyes. “I trust you.”

***

Thor was never, ever doing that again. He was still hard in his breeches, simultaneously grateful of and damming the codpiece he wore as part of his armor, beneath the leathers. Every step was torture.

“Oh My God, we have to do that again.” Darcy wobbled on her feet as Thor set her on the grass, his hand cupping her elbow as she struggled to gain her balance. “That was---I’ve never---You’re the best.”

She threw herself at him - as was her wont to do- and Thor caught her on reflex, swinging her in a circle, Molijer abandoned at his feet. He felt flush when she pressed a kiss to his cheek and hoped his beard would hide it. By the Stars - he was a grown man.
That wasn’t the problem though.

The problem was...Darcy was a grown woman. A very well grown woman. And Thor was weak to such wiles. They would absolutely fly again.

Chapter End Notes

are y'all suitably submersed into Thor's mind now?
Thor chose a tree, a towering old beast of a tree with gnarled, twisted branches barren of any leaves, and dry bark flaking and fallen in patches. It was, by all accounts, an ugly tree. But it was strong, tall and proud with a deep, chorus of life within it. “Uh - Thor buddy. I don’t wanna be a Debbie-downer, but we’re like not even quite out of Winter----”

“No.” Spring was upon them, climbing higher toward the sun every day. “Death bows it’s head to the coming sun - can’t you feel it? I can feel it. The snow shall not return.”

“Okay. Fair. It’s unseasonably warm for February's asshole. That doesn’t solve the dead tree problem.” She was barefoot, pale feet ghostly against fresh, budding grass, the thin fabric of her dress fluttering in the breeze. “No acorns. I mean - we could probably dig up a squirrel stash or something.”

“It isn’t dead.” Even now, Thor could hear the gentle, humming thrum of the Tree beside him. “It’s merely sleeping. I shall call the tree to wake.” Twas a gift of his, but easily eclipsed by his white-lightning thunder-punch smackdown, as Darcy called it. Still, Thor was fond of his gift for husbandry.

“Well alright.” She took a step back and tipped her head toward the tree. “Do your thing.”

“Do you think me incapable?” He hesitated, palms hovering over the rough bark. Thor was used to being dismissed by the Earthkin, and so it rarely rankled. They couldn’t conceptualize the reality of Gods, and proving them wrong had become something of a hobby. It was, in some ways, easier for them to believe without tangible proof. Still - Darcy was rarely skeptical.

She reeled back, just a little. “Why would I? You’ve never lied to me before.”

“No.” He let his palm meet the bark, and felt the pull of life reach out to his own. “Give me your hand, would you?” He held out his other, palm up and patient. Darcy’s hands were so small. Thor
could feel her pulse against his palm. “Close your eyes. I can...I can show you, I think.” He’d shown Sif once, when they were children, before Thor knew what it was to call to the life of something else, to reach out with our own. “I’ve done it before, on Asgard.” Beautiful, pragmatic Sif had found it...off-putting, as she did so many things she couldn’t understand. Thor held Darcy’s hand tighter, and called to the tree, pulling it further into himself as he listened for Darcy’s too. “Ah, there we are. Can you feel it?”

“Oh.” He felt the tremble of her body against his own and held his breath. “Oooh.”

He didn’t do this with people. It wasn’t his gift to be generous with it. It wasn’t the way his spirit sang, as his mother had put it. There were Gods who could - healers mostly. Thor couldn’t call to Darcy’s like he did the old Oak, but he could hear her. The thrum of her heart, and the hum of her spirit, he let it call to him, and followed the golden weaver’s thread, holding tight to the light of the oak, connecting the three.

“Thor.” Her eyes shot open, gaze meeting his as the oak came to life, lush curling leaves unfolding themselves from the long sleep. “This is---this is amazing. You’re amazing. I can---I can really feel it. This is----crazy.”

“This is nothing.” It pleased him though, that she liked it. She was watching the leaves come to life, little brown buds blooming fat, glossy acorns of pale, milky green, her blue eyes rapt with wonder and delight. “This is just...Fertility.”

“I thought that meant babies and stuff.” Below them, the ground rumbled as the roots stretched and straightened under the soil. Thor eased his hand from the tree, lest he pull it right back into the winter’s sleep. “I didn’t know it meant you could---this is really amazing.”

Her hand was still in his, soft and warm and fragile. Thor found he couldn’t quite let go of it, couldn’t bring himself to pull away from her call, and the little tangle where the life within them brushed. “That too.” In truth, Thor had been horribly embarrassed as a boy to be named the God of Fertility, as such things had often been granted unto girls. Frail, delicate, virgin girls who grew to be wizened old virgin crones with hunchbacks and mean cats - the Olde Mothers. It had sullied the joy of being thrice blessed, and he hadn’t brought himself to claim the right for many years. God of Thunder. God of Protection. God of Fertility? Of course when he’d grown a bit older, he’d realized ---women liked it. As a boy, Thor could not associate virility with the sentiment of fertility. But women liked it and Thor liked women. So when it came for his gifts to be called into question - like all Gods before him - Thor was tested. At great lengths, and all hours of the night. Virility, fertility, vigor and stamina. It made the symphony of life sound so much sweeter, when Thor knew it would serve to warm his bed at night. Not a single child was got on him - thus was his gift to giveth and prevent - but the women of his realms did so love to try. Of course - he did not say as much to Darcy. “There is life in all things. And it calls to me.”
“That’s beautiful.” She swung their hands between them, but did not tug herself free. “Is this how you’ll grow them for the bed?”

“Yes, but I’ll have to convince them to stop growing, at some point.” Wind pulled through the full, bursting branches, and from their green depths, an acorn dropped, bouncing off Thor’s shoulder. He laughed. “Ah. Perfect timing. They’re ready.”

“We need four?”

“I should like to build a four poster bed, with a canopy of crossing branches. I think perhaps if they’re willing, we might weave them. I made something like such on Asgard, but smaller.”

A memory, locked away in the dark and old, came to the surface. It had been a cradle for Loki’s daughter Hela before their father had cast her into the past as punishment for Loki’s unsanctioned union. She had been a beautiful child, with a head of unruly dark curls and bright eyes. Thor had been smitten, but not half as much as his brother. Odin had stolen the memory of her from Loki, but their mother had seen fit to hide it within Thor, sealed and unspeakable. It had frightened him, though, that single moment when he realized the depths of his father's power - the God of Gods. His was a heavy crown, one that would break a weaker neck. People believed in Odin - they had prayed to him, whole realms had prayed to him and he had built a throne on the power. Thor---meant to fill his throne and wear his crown---was no God of Gods. “These Midgardian Oak’s appear more amicable than those of Asgard. They should do nicely.”

***

Darcy did not settle on four. Together, they filled the inner pocket of her bag to bursting, with fat, acorns, some flawless, some faulted. Thor’d held each in his palm and listened to their quiet hum, a bass line heart-beat of potential. Darcy did the same, with her eyes closed, and her fist against her chest, acorn cupped against her heart.

The ones that passed her ritual were handed off to Thor for further testing, the others discarded back to the grass. It was impossible that she could feel them as Thor does; Darcy was painfully human, as he was reminded every day. Yet, every acorn she chose beat loudly in his palm, each a perfect, promising tree waiting to be born.

That evening, they poured them into a big glass bowl, Darcy’s nimble fingers picking and plucking at everyone. “How do we pick four out of all these?”

“We choose the four that call to dreams.” Thor sat on the end of the couch, Darcy stretched out on
the other end, her feet in his lap, and the bowl on her belly. He reached over and plucked a particularly fat, hard acorn from the top. “This one speaks to me and says - I will grow strong . Strength in all things is good.” He set it on the coffee table - it would do well. “Would else should I desire in sleep?”

“I don’t know.” Darcy sank her hand into the bowl, letting acorns spill from her palm.”Serenity? Peace? They’re kind of the same things. Peaceful dreams?”

“Very well.” He took her left foot into his hands and thumbed at the high arch in firm, rhythmic circles. “Which do you think would give me peace?”

“...I don’t know,” she said again, but she dipped her hand into the bowl. “They don’t talk to me like they do to you.”

Thor watched her, pale fingers navigating the spill of acorns, eyes keen and brow furrowed. “It isn’t words, so much. It’s like a hum. A feeling. All the world speaks without words if you can hear it. It’s almost like a song.”

She chose a pale acorn from the bowl, a wispy smokey green that stood out against the other, brighter kin. “I don’t hear it,” she said, her tone apologetic. “Must be a God thing.”

Thor abandoned his ministrations to her aching feet, smiling at her little sound of protest, to take the pale acorn from her hands. Its voice was quiet, peaceful like white-capped waves as they hit the shore. Serenity it had, in spades. Darcy had chosen well. “Perhaps. But I do not think so. What else should I desire in sleep?”

“Protection,” Darcy said at once, and Thor felt a pang in his chest for her. “No bad dreams.”

“Protection it is.” He reached into the bowl and waited, each acorn humming together like a tiny chorus. Protection, he sought, and took up a warm, spotted acorn into his hand. Its cap was cracked, only half the shell attached, but it called to him all the same. The side was scared and healed, pale in spots, and dark in others, and its voice was decidedly female. A warrior of an acorn then., a little Valkyrie seed. “Choose the last. Our wild card.”

“You’ll end up with something weird.” But she was already searching, delving deep into the bowl and when her hand emerged it held the final pick. A deep green acorn, with no cap, shaped like a heart. “Don’t tell me what it means. What it says to you, or whatever. Unless you want me to choose
“No,” Thor said quickly. Whatever she had chose would suit. He took the little heart shaped acorn and held it between two fingers. He had chosen this one in the park - he remembered hearing it’s little voice from the branches above. Many they’d chosen from the ground, but not this one. This was a giving acorn, that would grow to be a giving tree. They were always his favorite, on Asgard, and he would search them out in the fields when his mother sent him to build houses for the citizens. “No, this one’s perfect. Thank you.”

***

“Should have everything to build a bed for your bed.” Darcy's insisted on helping him build the box for the soil needed to grow his trees. “Oh my god, honey. Are you really wearing the red flannel? Why are you doing this to me?”

Thor looked down at his shirt. He had many such shirts for Asgard, many chosen by Darcy herself. “Tony said you would find it suitable.” On Asgard, such things were usually done shirtless.

“Oh I find it suitable. You’re like every sexy lumberjack all put together. Like the last six years worth of calendars, Mr. July.” She herself was dressed in her beloved leggings, and a fitted shirt of soft, heather grey. She had her hair up atop her head in a knot - bun - and the shoes she bought specifically for running, though she did her best to avoid the sport. “Sorry - I have no sexy lumberjack apparel. The closest thing I have to plaid is a school girl skirt, and I don’t think that’s your kink.”

“Few of my kinks involve any clothes at all,” Thor’s mouth said without any permission from his brain. He did his best not to engage Darcy in her flirtatious wordplay, fearful he’d enjoy it more than she.

A foolish concern. “Oh my god.” She looked absolutely delighted. “And here I thought you were a double scoop vanilla boring bone.”

Thor very nearly dropped the boards - cut from the gifted redwood - to the floor, in indignation. “Excuse me? I’m not---- I’m not boring.” Thor was all things adventurous, thank you very much, willing to go and do and see and try. “Darcy, I’m a warrior.”
Darcy was pulling out a particularly violent looking saw with a many-toothed round blade. “No, I mean sexually. Like - kinkless. You know. Vanilla. The slow-bone, in the dark, below the covers kind of guy. Love making stuff.” She made a face that perfectly advertised how she felt on the subject. “Heart boner sex. Affection erections. With hand-holding and too much direct eye contact.”

Thor blinked at her, hugging the boards to his chest in an awkward scramble to keep them upright. “Yes- I know what you mean. Why on----Oh.” Thor stared at her for a long moment, before turning slowly to set the wood down on the cutting table. “You and Jane spoke.”

“I mean - She had nothing but good things to say! Like ten out of ten, would do again which yeah---probably like...the wrong thing to say this side of a break-up, sorry!” Darcy hastened to add, her smile more of a grimace. “Sorry --- Sorry. Me and my big mouth. There’s nothing wrong with -- you know. Liking what you like.”

“Liking what Jane liked,” Thor corrected, feeling impossibly awkward but also embarrassingly desperate to clear up any ill-conceived notions as to his preferences for...things. “Many of my own er...interests...” Interests...seemed safer to say than kinks. “Weren’t really...Jane wouldn’t have been inclined.” Or physically capable, were she inclined. Jane wasn’t so much like to bruise like a tender peach, but break in half at the first press.

Darcy narrowed her eyes, vicious saw set aside on the cutting table. “Aww, no you can’t assume that. You gotta be upfront about those things. Janey might have been down.”

Definitely not. Jane had been the one to insist on their encounters happening within bedroom hours only, after all, beneath the sheets in a shroud of shadows. “Even were that so, some things are just...not meant to be. There wasn’t any point to bring desires that could not be accommodated.”

“Oh no - you gotta be more specific. I am invested now. Jane like---waxed poetic about your dick, I know all about that. I could probably draw it, blindfolded, from memory. I could absolutely pick it out of a lineup.” Thor felt his face heat when Darcy drew a familiar slight curve in the air with a single fingertip. Jane and Darcy had spoken of--- “What did you want that you didn’t think Jane would be down for? Threesomes? With me?” She winked like Thor couldn’t possibly have ever considered the idea and while he hadn’t --- well. He was now. “Whaaaaat. Do you like, grow a second dick for the solstice? Go into heat? I heard some freaky shit about your brother....can you get pregnant too? Are you into water sports? Pegging? Did you try to back-door her and it didn’t fit?”

“Darcy,” Thor managed, his voice breaking on a wheeze. “No! No --- I don’t know what most of that is, actually.” He had a few notions and none of Darcy’s suggestions painted him in any sort of attractive light. “No, I don’t grow a second anything! My brother changed genders to bear children, it wasn’t genetic. I don’t think I want to know what water sports and pegging are.” He paused. “I never put anything anywhere it wasn’t wanted, but if that last bit means what I think it does, it wouldn’t have fit if I tried.”
“Yeah Jane was kind of a tight-ass,” Darcy said on a sigh, confirming to Thor that it meant exactly what he’d thought. She bent down, fussing with the tidy rows of metal boxes beneath the work tables, and Thor stared at her lovely ass because this whole conversation wasn’t what he’d expected to be doing and he wondered if counter to Jane’s reluctance, Darcy didn’t mind…what had she called it? The back door? Crude…but effective. “Okay - so what’s so kinky that you couldn’t have asked Jane for it? Because I mean - if you were suffering through the slow-bone drone for her she could have at least tried for…I don’t know. Reasonable face fucking.”

Thor was painfully interested to know what Darcy considered reasonable face fucking, and by contrast, what unreasonable face fucking would entail. He hadn’t considered there were measures to such thing. “I don’t know what to say to that. To any of that. Whatever Jane spilled to you - trust that it was colored by her desires.” He scrubbed a hand down his face, frustrated and embarrassed. “That isn’t to say I didn’t enjoy our…time together. It just wasn’t…had I taken charge of things….”

“Oh.” Darcy rose, a box of nails held between both hands. “So that’s how it is, eh?”

“How what is,” Thor asked, despairingly.

“That’s your kink,” Darcy winked at him, vicious mouth curling up into a devastatingly coy smile. It wasn’t one Thor had seen aimed his way, for all her flirting, and it made him strangely hot. “You like to take charge.”

“I---” His throat clicked as he swallowed, dry on being caught out so easily. “Yes,” he said, with perfect honesty. He’d no reason to lie to Darcy. His desires were not shameful, after all.

And---

And---

And perhaps, he wanted her to know.

“Yes,” he said, again, bending down to haul up the rest of the cut timber. His arms flexed, pulling the rolled flannel to the limit of its capabilities where it stretched over his biceps. By the stars, but he was peacocking. Grown man, he despained to himself. He was a grown man. “So you understand why I did not feel it prudent to bring up between Jane and myself?”
“Uh---no? Like okay she never told me as much, but she could be into being...you know. Thrown around a little. I mean yeah, okay, she couldn’t handle pain at all, like I bet if you pulled her hair even a little, she’d tap out but---”

Thor fell still at that, throat dry for another reason. “Is that what you think it means to take control? To give it?” He couldn’t look at her as he asked, fearful of her answer. Fearful that it might be too right. Instead, he fussed with the measuring tape, marking the wood with notches where it would need to be cut. If she said----if she said---

“Uh. I mean. I guess not.” He could hear her indifferent shrug, though he still hadn’t turned back to face her, and tried not to feel disappointed. “I mean - that’s what it’s always meant for me , but yeah, Jane hated being told what to do.” Darcy snorted. “She probably couldn’t take it.”

*And you could take it?* “You hate being told what to do,” Thor reminded her instead, praying to a different god, some other, better god for something, anything---- his kingdom for a beer, a mead, a bloody lake to drink for he was hot and dry and Darcy thought giving up control meant being *thrown around and having her hair pulled*, so he was also very hard.

“Fair,” Darcy came to stand by him, her back against the table, elbow propped on the smooth surface as Thor continued his measurements. “But maybe that’s why I like it when I’m naked, ya know.”

*Yes.* “Yes.” What? No - no. He hadn’t meant to say that out loud. “I mean to say - I understand that there is...catharsis in submission. You are a woman readily in power. Many look to you for direction, for guidance. That you should find pleasure in relinquishing it...It’s not for everyone, but it’s not so strange.”

From the corner of his eye, he watched Darcy close her eyes, and *smile*. As if remembering something fondly. “Do you really think I’m giving up power?” She winked, pink tongue peeling between white teeth. “You think just because you’re in charge, I’m not in power? I might kneel, but I’m not weak.”

“Of course not.” Darcy was anything but. Thor opened his mouth - to ask her what she meant perhaps because he didn't’ *understand* - or worse, ask her to show him --- when the door to the workshop sprang open.

Tony clapped his hands upon entering, his very nature demanding all eyes upon him as Thor and Darcy jerked apart. “Kiddos, what’s happening. I see you’re putting the redwood to use after all.”
“A bed for our bed,” Darcy grinned. *Our bed,* Thor thought. “We were thinking - we’d just build a big flower box and he could sleep in a field of daisies.”

“Asphodels,” Thor said at once, a hazy dream space memory flittering to the forefront of his mind in a cloud of pale purple. His skin still felt too tight, the air charged by his own static and damnable lust. “Field of Asphodels.”

“You’re both weird and I regret coming in here,” Tony told them cheerfully, eyeing the work table, and the fine cuts of redwood. Thor had seen to it himself, sanding them each by hand, sawdust clinging in his beard.

Darcy raised a single brow. “Then why did you?”

“Pep needs you upstairs, something about tomorrow’s Ambassador luncheon. Looks like SHIELD’s trying to put their fingers in our food, so to speak.”


And then she was gone, grumbling and muttering. He watched her go, Tony beside him, and wood marked, waiting to be cut. “Ah. Well. Sorry to bust up your plans.” Tony eyed him, mouth turning up at the corners minutely, brown furrowed with his usual dangerous curiosity. “Jeeze, Point Break. You look like you need a beer.”

He could not help the laugh that startled from his lungs. Thor had prayed, and Tony Stark had answered. “Aye.”

***

They’d only just built the flower bed, a deep, wide box, just long enough for Thor to fully stretch him across. The soil had barely settled it freshly tilled soil when Thor received his *summons.* Darcy was perched on the edge, her feet stretched across the hardwood floors. Across the room, slanting beams of afternoon sunlight reached around the corners and stretched across the walls. Thor felt the summons again and sighed.

“I must return to Asgard.”
Darcy jerked on her perch, nearly toppling over. “But---you haven’t even been back long! A fricken month! I don’t want to give you up already. I just got you back. What about the trees?”

It was true. He’d landed in Norway late January, and they’d only just greeted March. “They would not call me so soon, was it not important. Heimdal made himself known, in the quiet parts of Thor’s mind. The Bifrost would descend soon, and Thor should take to the roof to greet it. “I should not keep them waiting long. Take care of our chosen four, would you?”

“Of course.” She looked so genuinely sad to see him go that Thor could not help but beg Heimdal for a moment - which he spent crushing Darcy into a fierce hug.

He pulled her up and spun her in a circle, relishing in her pleased squeal and the warmth of her breath where her mouth pressed against his throat. Boldly, he pressed a whiskery-bearded kiss to her temple. “Three days and I’ll return.”

“So I’ll see you in a month or so.” He had not set her down, but Darcy had pulled herself just far away to really look at him, dangling in his arms, feet bumping his knees.

Her lashes fluttered, and he forced himself to not lose himself in the constellation of her freckles. She really was very beautiful, and smart and kind. She was patient, and she believed his words, and she would miss him while he was gone, she would count the days to his return. She always had and he had never, not once, appreciate the sentiment. Fool that he was. Forever and ever, the fool that he was. And Thor? Thor would miss her. He always pined for his Earthly home and the family who had chosen him by the favor of merit and not the burden. But he would not fool himself to think he’d not miss her more this time. Differently, if for no reason at all then that he could.

He set her to her feet and ignored again the call of Heimdall - less amused now - to take a moment and fix Darcy’s hair. “I’ll try for sooner.”

“Jane will be back.” Her gaze fell to their feet, as did Thor’s heart to his stomach. “By the time you’re back - Jane could be back.”

‘Tony said you approved her return to Stark Towers.” He had left the whole thing to Darcy’s power, not out of laziness, but out of care. Tony would make no decisions that Darcy would not agree with on the subject of Jane Foster and her grants - and what better way to ensure that, than to let Darcy make them herself.
“Her research is important.” She looked up at Thor, and while there were no tears in her eyes - Darcy was not prone to weeping - there was a great depth of hurt.

“It isn’t more important than your hurt. Your feelings matter.”

“It is though. It’s important! She’s untangling the mysteries of the---”

“Not to me. It’s not important to me. They’re not my mysteries, and I don’t care what it is she thinks she’s doing, because all she’s doing is hurting those who care about her. Why must we be the cost?” He cupped her cheek, and kissed the other -- boldy, too boldly, but she looked so damnably sad. “Jane Foster's research isn’t more important to me than you---than your feelings. Or mine for that matter. We are important too, Darcy. Why must the stars matter more? They don’t care about her, not like we did.”

“I still care about her.” It was admitted in a small voice, and Darcy closed her eyes like she could hide from her own truths. “Stupid, huh?”

“Not at all.” The Bifrost would open soon, but Thor could not tear himself away - not until Darcy wasn’t so---not until she---Not like this. “Perhaps it means you are a better person than I, for if I care about Jane...it’s about the Jane I thought I knew. Who wasn’t at all real.”

“Pedestal’s crumbled, eh?” She tilted her face into his hand and there it was - the smile he could say goodbye on. “Maybe I’m a fool.”

“Never.” He could kiss her. He could kiss her and leave and be gone three days and a month all the same and it would be good, but it wouldn’t be right, or fair, or kind. “I have family less dear to me. I have had friends for hundreds of years who have cared less than you. You are a gift to the realms and you should be treated as such. Tony Stark knows.” Tony valued Darcy like a daughter, Thor thought. A frightening notion, all things considered. “You’re faithful, Darcy Lewis. Not foolish. More people would do well to follow you in kind. And even more should be so lucky as I, to have you as a friend.”
Heimdall met him at the gates, his face a grim blank canvas of absolutely nothing. “I know a woman you’d find very fascinating.” Natasha would like Heimdall too, Thor thought.

Heimdall made no comment, merely tipped his head toward the bridge. “Shall I announce your presence, my lord? The Council has been summoned, and they grow impatient.”

“They’re thousands of years old - what is a few minutes wait?” My Lord. It hit him strangely in the belly, the old and familiar words. Here - Here, Thor was Prince to the Throne of Nine Realms. Here he was treated as such. “Rest easy. I’ll fly in.”

And so he did, hammer held to the fore, red cape fluttering behind him and the people of Asgard cheered and greeted him, always and forever thrilled to see their prodigal son return. Thor touched down in the palace through the highest window of the Throne room where his father would sit with the Council, awaiting his arrival.

Bells tolled the Lightning Ballad, heralding the coming of the prince. Thor met the Council with a half-smile, landing hard on the marble floors. “Miss me already, friends?”

The Council of Nine was made of six representatives.

To the left of the Throne sat the representative of Álfheimr, his mother’s people. To the right, Vanaheim, Asgards mightiest allies. Niðavellir and Niflheim each had a council member too. Not
Jotunheim, not Muspelheim, not Hel.

Not Midgard.

“To what do I owe the pleasure of yet another summons.” Thor took the chair that had long since sat empty for Midgard and threw a leg up over the arm in a careless, indifferent sprawl. “Father?”

Loki raised a single brow at him. “It has been brought to our attention that your courtship of Jane Foster has come to its end.”

Oh. Thor sat up straighter and stared at him. “It has. Upon my previous return, it was made clear to me that Jane and I no longer follow the same path.”

“While it is true that I myself am wholly unsurprised at this outcome, the Council has raised concerns.” To his credit, Loki played their fathers face flawlessly. Every scowl. Every syllable. Every nuanced word. Loki had always been a consummate actor and their father a considerable character. “As it is known - I never agreed to the union of you and the Midgardian lass, but the Council did vote to allow marriage between you and Jane Foster. Great pains were made to allocate her as potential Queen, Thor. All for naught.”

Marriage. Thor had never even thought to marry Jane. He had considered a forever in her, but for some reason - marriage had never come to mind. Foolish. “But not for nothing, father.” Thor squared his shoulders and held Loki’s borrowed eye. Would that he could say this to the real Odin, but Loki deserved to hear it all the same. “I gained exactly what you and my brother so frequently laminated my lack off. Knowledge. Understanding. Sympathy. I was a fool. A fool in love, and now I’m neither and I understand what it was you and Loki tried to tell me. Teach me, really - when you sent me to Midgard. When Loki followed me on all my jaunts, like an oil spill of a shadow, desperate to prevent all the catastrophes I was so readily capable of. It is reckless for me to be so blind to the faults and failures - within myself and those around me. I am a fool too frequently. All that I do, I do with a brash and trusting heart. It will not serve me well as a King. I am learning now to think first, in all things. To temper my words and my actions. So my time with Jane Foster, the crumbling, failing ruins of such a relationship - it was not for nothing. I truly believe I have been made better for it.”

“You believe Laufeyson followed you in an attempt to stay your hand?” So like Loki, to ask the question most pressing to him, when so much else could be said. A consummate actor, but just as selfish as Thor at times.

“Not hardly. Not so blatantly. He would be better served by his mind than his hand, you and I both
know it. He often persuaded me to follow different paths, and I see now - he prevented a great deal of chaos in his mechanisms to manipulate me.” Loki had - once upon a time - been a very good brother. “For the God of Mischief, he prevented a great deal.”

Loki loomed in his throne, face impassive. “Loki’s manipulations are not to be heralded. Not here where he has caused nothing but pain. I would consider it near to treason, my son.”

“Do not condemn Loki for his manipulations if you do not intend to condemn me for being so easily manipulated. Not here and now, within these walls. How embarrassing for you father, to have crowned an empty-headed prince. Would that you had chosen Loki—”

“You are the rightful heir to the Throne of Asgard and the Nine Realms and you would do well to silence yourself.” Loki looked visibly shaken, cheeks ruddy beneath the tawny skin of their father. “This is not a council for Loki Laufeyson.”

“Friggason,” Thor corrected. “Or, if you cannot respect the late wishes of our mother and your wife, I will adopt him into my own house under the moniker of Loki Thorskin.” Thor would too, gladly and with great glee for it would gull Loki terribly.

“You will do no such thing!”

“I will, and I can.” Thor smiled blandly and followed the line of wizened gazes, the Council of Nine objecting to nothing. “As I am the only family to still lay claim to Loki, and he himself is not present to object. Shall we move on? All in favor of Loki Thorskin—”

“Silence,” Loki rumbled, and the ground beneath the throne room shook and trembled ferociously the way it had when their father lost his patience. Thor smiled at that too - both Loki and their father had always been so terribly fond of theatrics. “You are changed, Thor Odinson. That much I will grant you.”

“I am changing,” Thor corrected quietly. He could feel it beneath his skin, like the spreading warmth of a rising sun. Things were changing. He was changing. “I realize the fault of my youth now. I am still growing. I am not the King Asgard needs.”

“Not yet.” The Álfheimr representative agreed. “The Weavers do not speak, since the passing of your mother, our fair Goddess of Dreams. But they bring to us your thread and it has split into three, our thrice blessed Prince.”
Loki caught his eye, the pale blue familiar and foreign all the same. “Do you understand the meaning of this, son?”

“Three paths?” It was a familiar feat presented to many a God, and Thor had long since been burdened in all things by three. “Perhaps the nature of my Godends. Will one come before the other?”

“God of Thunder, God of Protection, God of Fertility.” Loki had always envied Thor for his blessings, even the effeminate one. “Yes, it does seem that way. I think the time has come that you will be asked to choose your blessing. Rare is the God who keeps his wealth unto death. We must choose one, and do it well.”

“The meeting was mere propriety,” the Councilwoman from Vanaheim said, with an errant wave of her hand. She was a warrior to make Valkyrie proud, a stout old woman who struck fear in the hearts of enemies even in her old age. “We know what you shall pick.”

Thunder. It had for so long defined him. Thor - God of Thunder. Lightning Bringer. A mighty gift that had served him well, and made him a force to be considered. “No,” he said, in a small voice not heard. “No---I should like time to choose.”

“What.” Loki blinked at him, still in their Father, still in the throne. “What?”

“I should like time to chose,” Thor repeated, slowly now. “Such things should not be done so quickly, I have learned that now.”

Loki leaned back in the throne and stared down his nose at Thor. “Do you expect me to believe that you may not choose your fiercest gift? Even without the Great Strength, lightning would protect.”

“I am thrice blessed,” Thor reminded him as if Loki would ever forget. “And I am not an army of one, Father. Strong I may be, fierce I may be - but such things are not always of most import.”

“You’ve never cared for your gift of fertility before.” Loki rolled their fathers lives. “Not for its practical purposes anyway.”
Thor pulled an acorn from his pocket and held it in his fist. “No - it has not always been my favorite. Were there not other things to consider, I would not hesitate to call the lightning to take my heart but I am to be a King, not a Kingdom and so I must consider my people and how best I might serve them.” He let the acorn fall and bounce across the glossy marble floor, sprouting as it did, roots growing and thickening and burrowing into the stone. It grew, and grew, and grew, branches unfurling and blossoming with vibrant green leaves. Thor stepped around it and patted the fresh bark. “One tree does not make a forest, after all.”

“What is the meaning of this, Thor Odinson,” the Niðavellir dwarf council pressed. A great, stout people, he looked down at Thor’s towering oak and smiled faintly.

“I should see the forest for the trees before I make my choice,” Thor told him plainly. “Is that all? I would return to Midgard to consider my choices if it is all the same to you.”

“A private council with your father first, perhaps. And the Spring Summoners Feast.” He clapped his hands, addressing the end of the council. “Thor Odinson has stated his case against the concerns regarding his courtship of Jane Foster. How does the Council speak?”

“Niðavellir hears Thor's words, and recognizes the change within him.” The Dwarf Lord tipped his head forward, a bow unto is own from such a sizable gentleman. “Until next time, your highness. I do so look forward to seeing what it is you become.”

The Álfheimr priest pursed his mouth. “So do the Elvenkin, your mother's people. May you be a blessing unto her name, Thor Odinson, Heir to the Throne of Asgard and the Nine Realms.”

“Niflheim hears you,” the right Councilmen nodded. “May the brightest stars lead you, Thor Odinson, and the spirits of Valhalla lend you their wisdom.”

“Vanaheim hears you,” the youngest of the council echoed. Or at least, Thor thought her the youngest. She looked youngest, but such things were not so easily considered. “And poses the question - if not Jane Foster....who?”

“I...don’t know.” Vanaheim was known for Dreamers and Seers. Thor wondered-----“Do you?”

“We saw your star in the field of Dreams, and you came to a mountain, where you knelt before a woman who held your crown.” Councilwoman Vanaheim smiled softly, opium-blue eyes as hazy as the future. “You are young, but youth is fleeting. Vanaheim demands a Queen.”
“I don’t... I don’t remember that dream.” But he did, almost, in a lavender haze. Asphodels - there had been a field of Asphodels. It had been a flower crown. “Who was she?”

“It is not for us to know.” The Vanaheim Councilwoman looked to Loki, tense in his stolen throne, fingers steepled - a trait both he and their father Odin shared. “King of Kings - what say you?”

“The Council of Nine hears you, Lady Vanaheim,” Loki said, with a pensive, apprehensive look. “But such things are for future council. Three paths, the Prince has been given - and in the spirit of his Three, three moons we shall grant him to make his choice.”

Three moons? That was nearly six months by Earth measure. Six months, without the intervention of his first life. Darcy would be thrilled. Darcy. “I move to welcome a Midgardian to the Council. It has been too long.”

Loki raised both brows and leaned back in his chair. “As the acting Midgardian Delegate, it is your right to choose the representative you feel best serves the wellbeing of Midgard. The Council hears you, and grants you your request.” He rose, all billowing capes and drapes and furs. “Adjourned. We welcome the council to stay for the Summoning feast.”

Loki did not lead him to the parlor behind the council room, but a salon favored by their mother, farther into the castle. It was horrifically pink, with shimmering silk drapes, velvet pillows, mountains of frills, swathes of lace and a King’s ransom in gold embroidery. A gift from eons past, to the new wife of Odin. Frigga had loathed it to the point that she cherished it dearly, spending ours among the frothing pastel nightmare, sewing or reading or honing her knives.

“The seasons change on Midgard swiftly,” Loki began, fiddling with one of the trinkets their mother had kept over the mantle. “They pass their years by the circle of it, I believe?”

“They do. Their Winter has closed its eyes to rest.” He had only just said as much to Darcy, not a week past. “Why do you say?”

“Because Spring has come to Asgard. It has come in line to the same Midgardian solstice and you are a Fertility god.” He shot Thor an arched look. “Feeling particularly randy as of late?”

Yes, actually, but he’d accounted it for the dry spell. “Their solstice is some weeks away.”

“And on Asgard, Spring has come.” Concise, and so unlike Loki- but it was Odin’s way, Thor would give Loki that. “Who is to say what siren call will beckon you on Midgard, but your heart is
tethered to Asgard and Spring is upon us, my son. I would ask that you consider remaining here until the season has passed---”

“That would be---nigh ten years by Midgardian measure!”

“But I know you will not,” Loki continued as if Thor had not interrupted at all. “You will stay for the Summoners feast, and call to the season as is your duty as the Crowned Prince.”

“I’ll stay for the feast and herald the coming of the Spring Mother,” Thor acceded. “But I’ll return to Midgard tonight.”

“No, you will honor the Spring Mother in the Olde Way,” Loki added. “As is your duty as the God of Fertility.”

It appealed to him. Deeply. *Viscerally*. He could have three women right now, and it would take no more than a *look* on his part. It had been too long, by Midgard or Asgardian standard, since he last buried himself in a rough-and-tumble lass, let alone any woman at all. Perhaps he would stay, only a day or two, and he could---

But every day here, weeks passed on Midgard, and those beautiful Midgardians weathered faster than he could keep count. A month of their lives tangled up in Thors, for an evening or two with eager Asgardian women. Could he spare it? “They await my return, on Midgard. I would not keep them waiting.”

“Asgard is your home. It is expected that you welcome the season.” Loki shook his head in the same tired manner of their father. “You cannot reap the rewards of being a Prince or God, without meeting the demands, my son. I would do well by this kingdom, Thor. And I would bid you do the same. Do not spite your luxury of calling Midgard home, by forgetting from whence you came. I am not asking. I am telling you - you will stay and call to stars and welcome the Spring Mother to bless our lands, as you have before and as you will again. Now is not the time to test Destiny by abjuring our duties. Fate is fickle, we would do well to tread carefully. We are long-lived, and long forgotten.”

He wondered how much of Loki’s advice was born from Loki’s own misdeeds against Asgard. “You would force me to bed a woman?” Thor reeled, hands balled into fists. “Will you force this nameless lass as well? Have you already chosen her?” Odin would have, for certain. With Loki, Thor was not so sure.
“You really have changed.” Loki’s wonder bled into Odin’s voice, and Thor very nearly cracked. He missed Loki at times - not the Loki of late - but the one of his youth. “There was a time when I would not need to have asked. I would have to haul you out by the bollocks. I can see it within you, a golden pulse. You have grown, Thor.”

“We have, the both of us.” For Loki too had grown and changed and become stronger and smarter and wiser for his faults. “Blessed are the--is the family, who grows together.” Blessed are the brothers who grow together. Their mother used to say that, pleased to have two sons so close in age.

“Take an Asgardian consort. Take two.” Loki paced the parlor, drab robes a muted stain on the cheery backdrop of salmon pink brocade walls. “I’ll summon---”

“Why are you so insistent?” Loki had never been overly invested in Thor’s sex life, outside of taking great amusement in disbanding any potential paramour. “Father.”

“They are fragile creatures, aren’t they?” Loki had stopped, sudden and still in his pacing, to look at Thor with pale blue eyes. “The Midgardians. They are delicate. You are not known for your even hand, my son. What happens if the Season calls to you on your Earth, where the women cannot soothe what Fate demands? I would not see you cause harm to something you insist on cherishing so.”

Dammit Loki, Thor thought. Still and always manipulating Thor from the chaos he would so blindly sow. Though Thor highly suspected that Loki’s words were couched in Odin’s concern. What he meant was - do nothing so jeopardizing that you might be forced to leave Midgard and inevitably discover and ruin the facade I have so carefully crafted in your absence. Much more likely, than any concern for Thor or the Midgardian welfare. “It as like as not that the call to Spring will not touch me on Midgard. Why do we bother? No one prays to the Olde Gods anymore.”

“We are not Gods to be worshiped. We are worshiped because we are Gods. Destiny is not bound to a planet or a realm.” Loki looked at him still, mouth a grim thin, line in his wrinkled, wizened face. “The solstice is not a burden, Thor. It is a blessing. We the Gods must learn to value such things. I’ll not see you waste your gifts as your brother did. You will stay and summon the Spring, lest she turn her back on our people forever.”

“Loki was every bit the God of Mischief,” Thor argued, because Loki was wholeheartedly the essence of his gift, to the core. He embodied all that his title demanded. Destiny made mischief necessary - the good chaos to balance the bad. Loki never understood that. Even now, as he stood before Thor, hidden behind a mask of his father and every bit the Good Chaos the world did demand - Loki did not understand. “A far better embodiment than I am as God of Fertility.”
“Yes he was.” Loki turned away, out the window that overlooked the courtyards of the palace. “Do you ever wonder if he could have been more?”

“Every day.” Perhaps it was easier for Loki to speak of it, hidden as he thought he was. “Loki and I are young, Father. I am changing, and I think - perhaps he is too. There is time yet for him to grow. Perhaps he will surprise us.”

“Do you know where he is, Thor?” It was not said in angry demand - but soft, and tired. “Such knowledge is treason, son.”

“He’s alive,” Thor insisted, giving nothing else away. He would not lie - Loki could smell a lie. “I know that he is. I can feel it in my heart of hearts. We have not seen the last of him, and we must hope----whatever darkness took his heart...will not keep him.”

“You think it madness that made him---” Loki shook his head. “Loki made choices, time and again, and he made the wrong ones. He betrayed us. He betrayed you. He aligned himself with a madman. He attacked an innocent and unarmed people---”

“They have a Hulk,” Thor smiled, and tossed one of the round, buttoned pillows into the air. “Midgardians are not unarmed. If you do recall -- they captured him. Largely without my help.”

“Yes.” Loki looked away. “But it still remains that Loki...”

“Is alive, and young, and changing. It was a madness that took him, Father. I know this. And he will wake from it one day, wracked with guilt and remorse and changed and then. Then, he will be judged for the choices he makes, clear-minded.”

“Do you think it is guilt he will feel?”

“Loki was never so caustic as the tales would paint him. Silvertongue, sharp tongue, sarcastic - yes. But only because he was sensitive. Mother always said Loki felt things more deeply than others and I believe it. Love, anger, shame, betrayal. All of it burrowed more deeply into his soul, and that is why his gift was chaos. Why he was so good at ferreting out the cracks in others - because he felt them. So yes. I think the guilt will eat at him. But we are long-lived, and there is nothing that cannot be redeemed.”

“I cannot offer him redemption, Thor. I cannot grant him a place in our kingdom.” He could not forgive himself, Thor thought. But then - it was a wonder if Loki would ever admit to any
wrongdoing at all, so Thor counted the need for forgiveness a win.

“You will not always be King.” Thor rose from the settee, and clapped Loki on the shoulder, and left. “My Kingdom will welcome him.”

***

Midgard would find the Summoners feast to be boorish, and cruel. And indeed, it involved an actual boar, slaughtered by Thor’s own hand and a knife carved from a fallen star. He stood bare-chested on the plinth at the top of the ceremonial hill outside the palace, a warm heart in his hand. “We water this land with the blood of this beast, born on this soil like it’s mother before. Such is life, and the circle of it.” His voice carried over the little valley, strong as the booming thunder. Blood, a thin red river, spilled down his arms and dripped from his elbows unto the ancient lands. “Hear us Spring Mother, and be welcome!”

“Be welcome!” Cried Asgard, at the bottom of the hill.

“Hear us Spring Mother!” Thor called, crushing the heart in his palm. “The cry of your children! We welcome you into the Valley of the Gods, and into our hearts.” Blood, a thin red river, spilled down his throat, as he brought the heart to his mouth and bit. Yes - his Midgardian brethren would not understand. “Humble us, Spring Mother, on the succor of your breast! May our trees grow tall, and our fruits grow fat and every babe in the womb be born healthy and hale. As the sun sets on this day, let us join tonight and pay homage on altars of bed clothes and the lover's chorus! Come tomorrow, rise! The dawning of the day, the commeth of Spring.”

***

As all Asgardian celebrations demand - they drank. Deeply, wildly, madly into their cups. The good people of Asgard spilled their wine in homage to their Lady Spring like they’d spill their seed deeper into the night. Loki had been right. The Summoning was no burden, as his kingdom did display as they danced and revealed and pursued careless tumbles. Let no babes unwanted get, Thor thought with purpose and felt the stars above shine farther for it. He smiled, and thought - this too is home.

***

Siff met him outside the parlors, dressed in her armor, a sword in hand and Thor swore at being played so easily. Loki knew him - the heart of him. Thor hadn’t lied when he said Loki could see the cracks in a soul, the fault lines and know them. He knew what would break Thor. “The
Midgardians miss you in your absence,” she noted, mouth quirked to the side - not so much a smirk, but a question. “So do we, your people.”

“Tell me no lies, Sif.” Thor drew his hammer and widened his stance just in time to block her first, cursory blow. This! Friendly battle - it made his pulse sing! “They’ll be gone, dead to the world with their children's children grown old and wise before you notice my absence as more than anything that brief reprieve.”

“Well I do already grow tired of your incessant talking,” Sif admitted, kicking off the stone wall to drive her elbow into Thor’s underbelly. His armor took most the blow, but the impact still shocked the breath from his lungs, and he threw up his hammer, humping high to dodge the swing of her blade. He grabbed her hair, snatching up the dark curls around his fist and yanking her back, yard enough to make her stumble. “You say the sweetest things.”

“I was never much one for words.” Sif drew Thor’s knife from his belt and reached up to smash the hilt against his knuckles. He released her too quickly, and she stumbled, jabbing hard and quick against his left knee. Thor fell too, in an ungainly sprawl, as she swept out her leg. She sprang forward faster than he and pressed her foot ominously between his legs. “I did miss you though. No one hits me quite as hard.”

“Only a fool would come at you with anything but his all.” Thor closed his thighs around her ankle and rolled, slamming her to the ground. Sif was by no means a lightweight, but Thor was stronger, yanking her belly up across the marble floor. He rolled himself over her, pinning her in place with the bulk of his body and perhaps... Perhaps that is what did him in. The crush of bodies, the nigh-forgotten feeling of a woman beneath him. Oh, but he did miss it. “Doing my father’s bidding now, are you Lady Sif?” Softly spoken, Thor felt his heart catch in his throat. “Your loyalty is inspiring.” Indeed- Thor felt very inspired.

She looked away, throat rolling in the palm of his calloused hand. “As my King commands it.”

Thor turned her face back to him, catching her flinty, gimlet gaze. “By the Stars --- you know.”

“What do I know?” She asked, dark curls spilling across her face. “Do I know that Odin fell into the Long Sleep on the brink of war? Do I know that the only thing keeping this realm together while you’re off playing the happy human, is Loki’s facade? Do I know that to speak it is certain death - not only for myself? Then yes - I know.”
“The Throne is not yet mine,” Thor pressed, ever so gently, against her windpipe. “Even in the Long Sleep - Odin’s power did not come to me. It is not yet meant to be. The paths are as they should be, it would seem. Not even the Weavers have broken their vow of silence on this secret.”

“With Loki on the throne, a facade that would not sustain were you in the palace. You two bicker like children.” She pressed against his palm, cutting off her own breath. “And horror of horrors - he has served us well. Better in some ways, than even Odin.”

“He has.” Thor agreed, hand slipping from her throat to the line where her armor ended, exposing the soft slope of her collarbone. A hardened warrior, but Sif’s skin was soft. Thor ached for it. He was both weak and very much hard up. It had been so long, though. “Did he send you to me Sif? Are you so loyal as that?”

“Odin bid I serve the Kingdom.” Sif tipped her head back, exposing her throat and Thor...Thor could not help the hot pulse of want that boiled his blood. “I have half a mind to obey.”

“Only half a mind?” He rolled his hips between her thighs. “And the other half?”

“Does not enjoy being treated as some concubine.” She bared her teeth. “He could have sent any number of women - the frothing, ovulating hordes desperate to sow your seed in their waiting bellies - but he sent me. Tell me why Thor. Surely you’ve harbored no great affection for me.”

“A dear friend, and nothing more.” Thor eased up immediately, only to find himself locked in place by her formidable thighs. “I seek no paths not open to me,” he told her firmly. “I shall go.”

“Why’d he send me, Thor?” Her gaze narrowed. “And why would you so willingly succumb? You’ve no need to be easy; you have a great many choices.”

“Because I’ve grown out of my taste for frothing, ovulating hoards intent to test me as a God and you are very beautiful and violent and strong and more importantly, Loki cannot imagine a woman more bewitching as you. He could hardly conceive the idea any man would tell you no.” He braced both hands beside her head, and held his weight on his knees. “And he’s not wrong. You are....exactly what I....” Need. No, but that was selfishly put and a lie to boot. Sif was not what he needed at all. “Want. You’re exactly what I want. Something beautiful and violent and strong and more importantly - not looking to test me. You’ll not cry to wake in the morning and find me gone. But you needn’t do this thing. Not to please him .”
Sif relaxed beneath him but curled her calloused fingers into his cape. “You mistake me, my Lord. I’ll do nothing to please him.” She grinned, eyes sparkling. “I shall do it to spite him. And if it pleases me in the processes, I shall consider that a boon.”

“I will endeavor to do my best, my Lady.” Oh, but he would do his best to make her cries ring like bells through the golden halls of the palace. Let Loki ruminate on that. “I’m going to pretend you’re someone else.” With her dark curls and wide hips----from the back perhaps, he could lie to himself. “In the interest of honesty.”

“Indeed.” Sif snorted, inelegant and charming. “In the interest of honesty - I intend to do the same. Do we have an accord?”

“I break a depressing dry spell, fulfill my duty as God of Fertility and fuck the Spring Season straight into your cunt while you enjoy yourself in spiting my jealous brother by crying very prettily while I do it?”

“As our King commands it.”

They did not go to his rooms. Indeed, Thor wasn’t particularly certain where they went, only that there was a bed and that was enough. Thor threw her on her belly, tugging wildly at her moleskin breeches, tangling them in her boots. “Leave them,” she demanded when he moved to pull at the heels. “It doesn’t matter - just---”

“Quiet.” Her voice was wrong - too refined, to cultivated by an ill-spent youth intended to make a Lady out of a warrior child. He tore at the buckles, fingers fumbling the clasps, and wretched away her armor, tossing it aside with a violent clatter. Her back was smooth and pale and her dark curls reached almost far enough to be convincing. Her backside, while perfectly round, was a bit too firm, but Thor didn’t think it would matter much longer.

He hauled her to her knees, nearly forgetting his own trousers altogether. Bless the Midgardian mastermind behind zippers - Thor didn’t think he could manage stays right now. He freed himself, hard and aching, and drove into her without any warning at all.

It was cruelty done, but her pained cry did nothing to cool his fires. Nor did the way she pushed back. She was wet, if not quite wet enough, but the clinch and pull of her compact body were it’s own delicious tortures. She fucked herself on him, desperate to take control, and Thor pulled her up, back against his chest, and held her in place once more with a hand at her throat. “Shhh,” he hissed
into her ear. “Obey your King, my Lady. Let me have you.”

Sif bared her teeth, hissing sharply before burying them into his arm and Thor—-Thor felt himself grow harder. By the stars—but it was good. She was juxtaposition, fight and give all the same, and Thor sank into her sweet cunt with a driving, violent force. His other hand, the one not holding her in place, moved between her thighs.

Perhaps Loki was right—the season should be greeted. "Call for her," Thor goaded. "Cry your homage to the coming season. Come now—let her hear you."

Sif writhed against him, growing wetter at his every touch, keen to steal her own pleasure, Thor’s own be damned. Darcy would fight like a warrior too—twice as hard and with half the effect. Oh, how sweet she’d be—-the fruitless push of her body against him. On her knees like this, in supplicant’s surrender. What was it she said though? That though she gave control upon bended knee - control but not power. What did that mean?

But how delicious it would be to learn her secrets. Fierce and helpless and trusting, Darcy spread out for him. Below him, all loose-limbed and full bodied. Ahh---but the sweet give of cunt. Darcy was not so hard bodied as Sif. Oh but to imagine sinking his fingers into the plush curves of her thighs, as he sank into the plush heat between them. To see the pale purple bruises in the might of morning, little badges of glory for his fierce little warrior, where she'd remain, sated and sloe-eyed across his bed. She would cover them, but Thor would know they were there.

"Thor!"

Thor came back on the edge of losing himself altogether, his hand tangled in Sif’s hair, her back arched away from him as she moved between his cock and clever fingers. She was coming, he could feel it, the delicious supernova pulse and he moved his hand from her hair to cover her mouth and came when she bit him again.

They disentangled and sprawled in a heap of sweaty limbs atop the coverlet. “I should be spiteful more often I think,” Sif sputtered between heaving breaths, her voice a lazy drawl. “You paid good homage to Mother Spring, as well. She would be wise to heed the call of her children in this union. Blessed for sure.”

“Perhaps I’ll pay her another.” Thor raised his arm from where it had laid across his face, to eye his hardening cock. Spring commeth, and too did Thor - again and again and again. “How does in ten or so minutes sound?”
“I can only bring myself to waste so much time spitting your brother, enjoyable though you do make it. I thought you had very important Midgardian things to get back to?”

“I do,” Thor agreed - for he very much did. “But I can hardly return like this.”

“It’d be a shame to lose your cock on the Bifrost I suppose.” She rolled to her side, head propped in her hand. “Who did you pretend I was?”

He didn’t think to lie, caught in post-coital bliss. “Her name is Darcy. She is small and fierce.”

“The Lady Lewis?” Sif sat up suddenly, careless of her bare breast, and stared down at him with raised brows. “Was she not the heart-sister of your past paramour? Thor - Frigga taught you better! You should be ashamed.”

“They had a falling out!” Thor had, at the moment, forgotten that Sif had met Darcy. “No different than Jane and I, really. She is---It isn’t like---” Thor sputtered, and threw his arm back over his face. “Why couldn’t I have chosen her first?”

“Because Jane Foster threw herself at you like a frothing, ovulating hoard and your taste still ran as such then, I think,” Sif said dryly. “You do so love to be worshiped.”

“I’m a God, it’s a thing.” He peeked at her from the bend of his elbow. “It isn’t like that with Darcy. She is my friend.”

“Pity you,” Sif sniffed. “But perhaps it’s the sort of comeuppance to humble ye, King of Kings.”

“On Midgard, I am no King. I am no Prince. I’m not even a God.” Thor felt a smile spread across his face. “I am nothing, and she is my friend anyway.”

“I’m glad.” Sif laid back down beside him, hair spilling over his arm. “Have you a chance with her, then? I did like her. She’d hold her own among our kind well.”
“She would.” Did Thor have a chance with Darcy? “Perhaps I do have a chance, but none that I deserve.”

“All the more reason to cherish it, I suppose.” She patted his arm awkwardly. “If you don’t intend to stay, I suggest you leave. These are Loki’s rooms.”

***

He stole the nova gossamer curtains from his mother's library on his way out, and a stone-potted plant no bigger than his palm that flowered on lucky days. “Heimdall,” he greeted the Gatekeeper with a firm handshake and a rough pat on the back. “How long has passed on Midgard?”

“Six days.” He cast his gaze out into the Beyond. “Are you ready, my Lord?”

“Aye.” He held tight his hammer and braced himself against the bridge. “Send me home.”
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

New Tricks is still being tricky because all my brain wants to write is Thor.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Darcy met him on the roof as she had last time, an early morning breeze pulling at her hair. “Aww, dude - I am loving the short stay. How long were you there?”

She didn’t greet him with an embrace this time, and Thor felt his insides seize uneasily. She knew. She knew what he’d done. “Only an evening.” But she couldn’t know. How could she know? Sif wasn’t one for gaudy battle marks as such, and save for the single fading bite mark hidden from view - there was nothing.

Darcy rocked on her heels and nodded once, arms hugging her dressing gown closed around her body, instead of hugging him. “And...everything went well? No battle, no bloodshed?”

“Oh, nothing so dire.” Thor looked out across his beloved New York skyline. “It was a Council meeting, with my father. The Council of Nine summoned me on the behalf of the Weavers. They call to the lines of Fate and mine had split in three.”

He felt her startle beside him, more than he saw it. Her soft palm slid over the bend of his arm and it warmed him. “Is that---is everything okay?”

Thor cast her a reassuring smile. “It is nothing to worry about. I am Thrice Blessed, rare but not unheard of. What is rare, is the God who keeps the wealth. It is like I will be asked to choose. Thunder, protection, or fertility.”

She squeezed his arm and dragged her hand down the length to tangle their fingers together in comfort. She didn’t know. Or she did - and she did not care. More likely, really. Why should she care? They were only friends. Any further affection was held by Thor and Thor alone. “That’s tough, dude. You seem to love them all so much.”

Thor blinked at her, mouth frowning. “You don’t think I’ll choose the thunder?”
“I don’t think it’s fair to make those kinds of assumptions. I mean - you love your lightning. But it’s just a part of you.” She shrugged, and her dressing gown slipped to expose her pale collarbone. It was not so different than Sif’s, pale and delicate with a sloping curve. But Darcy had a scar there he longed to ask about.

“As any good King should be,” he agreed, though he wasn’t sure Darcy was correct in her assumptions. All the best parts of him were tied to lightning, weren’t they?

“Oh---well. I actually meant like...as a God does.” She stared up at him, sea-storm eyes bright in the coming sunlight. “This isn’t really a Prince Thor thing, right? This is about you being a God.”

And Thor had not considered it thusly. The Council would ask what he chose - but in truth, they had no running over how Thor decided. Indeed - Thor mightn’t have little choice. Such things were for Fate. “It is.”

“So maybe you should consider it as a God does. And not by what your Dad wants or the Council or any of them because they’re not actually the ones asking. Whoever...whatever made you a God is asking and that’s who you’ll answer to.” She tugged his hand and pulled him toward the elevator doors. “Maybe you do choose lightning. Who knows. Whatever you choose---it’ll be the right choice. I think you’ll pick whatever one helps you serve others best. That’s who you are.”

Thor let himself be lead. “How can you be so certain?” It felt shameful to ask, like begging compliments, but Thor needed to know, by Darcy’s own word. Darcy - who asked nothing of him, ever.

“Because you’re the least selfish person I’ve ever met.”

Inside the elevators, he could smell the flowery scent of her soap and was _sure_ she could smell his sins in turn. He was a _wretch_ - weeks out the door of his previous relationship with Jane, who he’d nigh abandoned all else for, and so eager to call Darcy his castle in the sky, his home, while bedding another woman entirely. He was _scum_. And selfish. So very, very selfish. “I’m not so sure that’s true.”

“Everything you do, everything you are,” Darcy explained in earnest, as they made their way - still hand in hand - to their quarters. “As a Prince, you serve your kingdom, as a hero, you serve all nine realms, and as a God----anyone who prays to you. What’s selfish about that?”
And as a friend - he was vermin. “You are---blinded by bias. Every day I spend upon Midgard is selfish, every time I call it home. It was selfishness that landed me here,” he managed to stammer, as she nudged him to sit on the couch. He watched her disappear beyond the hall into the bathroom, and reappear a moment later, a damp cloth in hand. “What are you---”

“Let me---” she began, gesturing to his face. “You have....blood. On your face.”

“Oh . Oh---You shouldn’t----no, let me---” But Darcy was already wiping away the blood of the Summoner’s Call with gentle hands. “It isn’t...”

“Are you okay?”

“It isn’t my blood.” Would that it was, and he could pretend to deserve. “It's sacrificial.”

“Is it like...a person's?” Her hands trembled at the words, but she did not stop. ”Did you sacrifice a person?”

“No.” Thor laid his hand over hers and stilled it. “No, Darcy---a boar. It’s an offer to Mother Spring. As a fertility God, she is something like a patron saint, in a way. I must greet her on the Solstice, and welcome her home.”

“So the boar...” She lowered her hand, and Thor cupped it in his own, pink-stained cloth caught in the tangle. “What’s it for?”

“We water this land, with the blood of this beast, born to the soil like its mother before,” Thor recited, brushing his thumb over her knuckles, desperate to soothe that last little shake. “Such is life and the circle of it.”

“Earth to earth,” Darcy hummed, fingers clenching over the cloth. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

Those were Olde words. “Some of the Earlier Apocolytes would say as such, actually, but I always thought it sounded so tragic so when it came to me to summon the Spring Mother, I chose text from earlier callings. Where did you hear that?”
“It’s from the Bible,” she shook her head and frowned. “No---not quite. It isn’t said like that. It’s...what is it...Something about faces and bread and....return unto the Earth, for from it we were taken, we were dust, and to the dust, we will return. Genesis 3:19.”

“The Midgardian Apocolytes used an altered version. Among the nine realms, we say ‘let the cosmos take us home, from the stardust we are born, and to the Stardust, we return’. It is like that.” Thor looked down at their hands, where the blood had smudged from the cloth to stain Darcy's bare hands. “Why would you help me with this?”

“Thought it was yours.” Darcy leaned forward, eyes closed, to press her forehead to his arm and Thor wanted to pull away and hold her closer all at once.

“And when I told you it was not, when I told you it was a sacrifice - your hands did not hesitate even as you asked.” She had continued as if his answer did not matter, and Thor did not fully know what to do with that. “What if I had said yes?”

“Then...you said yes.” She didn’t look at him as she spoke. “And I would have stayed and helped you anyway because if you’d said yes---well...there’s no reason you’d hurt anyone if you didn’t have too. And if you said yes, you’d probably need me more. You don’t want to hurt anyone Thor.”

“Your faith is remarkable” Thor marveled, looping his arm around her shoulders. He pulled her knee over his own to bring her closer and felt her melt into the curl of his body. Her gift for touch was remarkable too. Midgardians were staunch with tactile comfort - but not Darcy. How lucky he was that it was she who discovered him first, beneath the broken skies of New Mexico.“I am sure I don’t deserve it.”

To that, Darcy had nothing to say. Instead, she returned to her ministrations, closer now, to clean the blood from Thor’s face. “Did you eat the boar?”

_I ate the heart while my people watched. All of it, every bite. “It was put to roast after the celebration. They’ll probably eat it for breakfast.”_

“You ate some of it,” she said, with zero accusation, as the soft, uncalloused pad of her thumb dragged across his bottom lip. He felt himself stir in his trousers and wondered at the way she could call to him faster with that single touch, than any goddess before. _I am a wretch_, he thought again.
Boldly, perhaps come-drunk by his time with Sif (it had not even been an hour, after all - Thor could still taste the salt of her skin on his tongue), he kissed her thumb. “Yes, I did.”

Little fingers dug into his beard, nail tips biting into the skin beneath. Her palms would be tacky with old blood when she pulled away. Thor swallowed hard, and Darcy felt the roll of his throat beneath her wrist where it rested against his neck. “Tell me.”

“It’s not...kind.” Thor’s hand spasmed where it curled over the small of her back and he hid the nervous gesture in hauling her up to perch fully on his thigh. She was tactile - they were tactile. It wasn’t odd, not at all, but the moment felt ripe with static pulse. It felt like a cusp - like a choice to be made. “Midgard wouldn’t understand.”

“I am not Midgard - I’m only a part..” Darcy looked at him, mouth pursed when he did not speak. “Just because we don’t do it now, doesn’t mean we never have.” She slid her hand from his cheek to the back of his neck and she felt so small, in his lap, pressed against him. Thor wished he hadn’t taken Sif, wished he’d saved himself for this moment, wish he had the bravery to kiss her. He was hard, and he was sure Darcy could feel it against her thigh. “The Aztecs sacrificed Virgins to bring a healthy harvest in the Axial Age. Mayans, Incas - it was pretty big in Mesoamerica. They called it Qhapaq Hucha - and they sacrificed kids. When I went into Political Science - I put a lot of emphasis on Cultural Anthropology and sacrifice? It’s almost universal. Christianity is rampant with human sacrifice --- often someones own child or brother. Abraham and Isaac. God - the one a lot of Midgard believes in - he sacrificed his own son. Greeks sacrificed young boys to Zeus. In China, people were sacrificed to create an army in the Afterlife for the Gods.” She paused. “It’s always for the Gods - did you know? Did they do that for you?”

“Yes.” Not Thor personally - anyone with half a brain would realize you don’t kill anything to bribe a veritable life-God. To his Father, though - many. And to the others? More. “We do not ask for such gifts. But blood...speaks. Life is universal.”

“So tell me.”

And so Thor did. Darcy was not so faint of heart as to tremble for gore, and she had asked. She wanted to know. “I ate the heart. I cut open the beast and pulled the heart out myself, and I ate it. On a hill, a plinth, before a dais stained in tales of seasons passed- while my people watched and cheered and I called to Spring Mother between every bite.”

“You ate all of it?”
It had not been his first, and it would not be his last. He remembered though - as a young boy - standing on the plinth, heart in hand and fearing the taste would turn his stomach before all of Asgard and the Nine Realms. He remembered fearing it would be too tough, that his teeth would not sever the sinew and he’d struggle like a fool. He remembered the first bite - how it had gone down so smoothly in a spill of warm blood, how the heart had twitched in his hand, even as he bit into it again and again. How it had been soft in his mouth and had tasted like nothing he’d ever known before. He’d liked it. His Mother had told him that was a good sign - that the Stars had chosen well in him.

But he himself was never so sure. He wasn’t supposed to like it. He was supposed to suffer through it, for the sacrifice. He was supposed to choke on it, but do it anyway, a feat of strength and perseverance. He wasn’t supposed to savor it and so he could not say it, not so loudly.

He leaned forward, bringing his cheek to hers so he could whisper it instead. “All of it.” And it was only the rapt-eyed watching crowd that kept him from licking his fingers clean.

She had the cosmos in her eyes, he thought wildly, watching her pupils expand like exploding stars. Thor had left blood from his own face on hers, a smudge across her pale cheek and it looked good. It looked bright and violent, like war paint, on her porcelain skin. He was hard beneath her thigh and he stank like the sex of another woman and he could feel Darcy’s nipples stiff beneath her dressing gown where she’d twisted to press her chest against his. The violence in them calling to one another - Thor could hear it, could feel it in the pulse of his own heart, of hers. It would be so easy. To tip her back, spill her across the couch and fit himself between her spread thighs. And she would let him - she’d never been shy in her appreciation - but he shouldn’t and he knew that. He had a reason not to after all. It was a very good reason, one he held onto daily---

But he could not recall it, with her warm in his lap, red-mouthed and pink-cheeked. She gasped and he realized too late he’d grabbed onto her. Hands at her hips, too hard. She’d bruise if he didn’t stop. But instead of releasing her - he gripped her harder when she didn’t protest and watched her lashes flutter and her lips part. She’d bruise such a lovely shade of stormy purple. A shocked, breathy little sound escaped her, the warmth of it spilling over his own mouth - she would taste so sweet.

He should stop. He should stop, but he couldn’t, and so he would beg of her to do instead. He was weak. She was stronger. “Darcy...” He should stop - but he couldn’t. “Little girl...”

"Tell me more?" Darcy whispered too, though there was no need, breathless and sigh silent. Thor felt it in his bones, felt it dig deep inside of him. Outsight, lightning lit the sky in electric purple, a heat storm like the one inside him.

The bathroom door sprang open down the hall and Darcy threw herself off Thor’s lap like he’d shocked her (not impossible). “Shit - shit--”

“Hey Doll? You got any towels? There ain’t any in the cupboard.”

“Yep!” Darcy called back - to Barnes, who was in her bathroom just past sunrise. Naked in her bathroom. “Yep. Yeah. Gimme a minute. And stand in the tub, I can feel you dripping on my floor.”

“Bring me a towel and I’ll dry it!”

The bathroom door closed and Darcy looked at him. “It’s not--not what you think.”

“I don’t think anything,” Thor assured her and counted it for the very first lie he’d ever told her because he thought - he thought Barnes was bedding Darcy, had only just the night before and maybe Darcy couldn’t smell the sex on Thor over the stink of her own and he felt violent at the very fucking thought, shaking with a new and strange rage. Outside, the sky shifted too quick, clouds rolling in mourning shades of grey. He couldn’t handle the sudden ache of guilt, though, and continued. “Darcy, you’re a woman grown. It’s none of my business what you do.” Who you do, any and all that aren’t me - it’s none of my business. And Thor was a hypocrite for feeling anything at all on the subject. Had he not just laid with a woman an hour prior? But he’d thought of nothing but Darcy. He’d pretended it was her - he’d accepted Sif under the condition that he’d pretend it was Darcy - and Darcy had fucked Barnes.

“Alright.” She swallowed, and Thor watched the roll of her throat, her pale unmarked neck. She looked - hurt. “But like...If...if you wanted to know. We’re not---Bucky’s been staying here since you were gone, because the stupid Ambassador retreat, there’s still delegates everywhere and since you weren’t here...He just figured. Better safe than sorry.”

“Oh.” Say more you bloody fucking fool. “Of course.” He wanted to say - he wanted to say but I am returned now and so it isn’t necessary. “You should...you should bring him towels.”

“Don’t leave.” And damn, but he had intended too. “Please? I’ll kick Bucky out. I missed you. I have---actually I have something to show you! I--while you were gone, I--just don’t leave, so I can show you alright? Stay out of your apartment - don’t ruin my surprise.”

***
So Thor waited like an idiot on Darcy’s little purple couch, because she had asked and he was weak for her. Outside, the clouds did grumble but he sent them away like errant children. Barnes wasn’t bedding Darcy and even if he was - Darcy could...do whatever she wanted. As Thor had! Not but an hour ago, shamelessly and without much protest. Darcy wouldn’t care that he bed anybody, as he should not care who she took. And so he was acting like a fool again, and a hypocrite and possibly a bloody child. Darcy wasn’t his.

But she could be. She wants it.

And Thor thought that was true - so deliciously true. So what was it that stayed his hand from just letting himself have her? It would be so easy.

But nothing good was ever easy, and nothing easy was ever good.

Barnes spilled out into the living room in a thin burst of steam, damp hair curling around his face. Darcy liked long hair, she marveled at Thor’s so often, liked to tangle it in her hands, curl it around her little fingers. Barnes had long hair. Thor’s was longer.

“Woah buddy,” Barnes reeled back, nostrils flaring as he looked at Thor on the couch and Thor was reminded - Barnes wasn’t wholly human anymore and if Darcy didn’t know what Thor had done-Barnes did. “Didn’t know you had a girl on Asgard.”

“I don’t,” Thor said tightly, even as Darcy stepped back out into the living room, fully dressed. She was staring at Thor, brow furrowed, and mouth pursed. "I don't have anyone on Asgard," he stressed, holding her gaze.

Barnes whistled through his teeth and tapped his nose. “Well - I can tell you had at least one while you were there. Did you even shower? You smell like you rolled right off and called it done.”

“I---” He felt compelled to explain himself. Like Darcy had, sooth away any misconception. Except that was what he’d done, exactly, and so what was there to explain? “I---”

“I---” He felt compelled to explain himself. Like Darcy had, sooth away any misconception. Except that was what he’d done, exactly, and so what was there to explain? “I---”

“Leave him alone,” Darcy grumbled, as she pulled her hair back into a bun and headed for the kitchen. “I need fucking coffee for this shit---”
“You know, I really thought you two had something going on,” Bucky tipped his head between Thor and Darcy and Thor thought it wouldn’t be very hard to throw him through a window. “The way Darce’ talks---”

“Well we don’t,” Darcy snapped, slamming a cabinet and Thor felt suddenly very small. "So he can go and fuck whoever he wants. Just like I can. Just like you can. So leave him alone.” She stepped back into the sitting room, a thermos in hand. “Come on Buck - Pepper has the new Ambassadors guest manifest to go over for Stark’s party.”

Barnes frowned. “I thought you were gonna show Thor---”

“He knows where his room is, he can check it out himself,” she called, not meeting Thor’s eye as she crossed the sitting room and slipped on her shoes. “I’ll see you later.”

And then - Thor was alone, the pink-stained cloth abandoned at his feet, feeling guilt-stained and stupid.

So maybe Darcy did care that he’d bed another woman. Thor didn’t really know what to do with that.

***

Upon seeing what Darcy had done for him, he did not feel better. In his room, the flower box was as he had left it, except now four new greens had budded and pecked their way out of the soil like new spring chickens. They stood proudly, little sapling oaks, in every corners of the box. Darcy had planted them herself and watered them and cared for them and coaxed them to life in the few short days he’d been gone and he’d fucked Sif because he couldn’t help himself.

What a fool he was - forever and always.

***
“So, what’s the deal with you and Darcy anyway?”

As of late, there was no deal at all. Thor had been back two days - and Darcy had been all smiles and zero free time. She was avoiding him with such great craft, he very nearly suspected magical intervention. Thor dodged Barton’s fist easily, throwing an arm up to counter the second attack. “I’m afraid I don’t know what you mean, friend.”

“Lie,” Barton sang, sweeping his leg out and kicking Thor in the back of the knee. “I lie for a living.” Thor stumbled but didn’t fall, throwing his elbow back to catch Barton -somewhat gently - in his pale white underbelly. “You’ll have to do better than that, if you wanna lie to me, Sparkles.”

He let Barton’s next hit fall fast, moving into the blow and letting his knuckles strike hard against the metal. He felt nothing but grinned as Clint shook his flesh hand out. “I speak only the truth. I have no deals with the Lady Darcy.” He grabbed Clint’s arm and twisted, forcing the man to spin with the bend, lest the arm pop from the socket. “She is my friend. She is my first friend, really, on all of Midgard.”

Clint fell to his back, and held out a hand for Thor to grasp and haul him up. It was hardly a fight for him, but Clint appreciated the practice. Thor always played gently with the humans, though Clint Barton was a formidable foe. Clint leaned against the ring as he asked, wiping sweat from his brow. “Why isn’t she more?”

Mirroring the gesture, Thor fell back too and rested against the rope partitions of the raised fighting ring. “She is---We are friends. It’s unseemly to even consider---- Darcy is---like a sister. Little sister.” Ah. Yes. Fabulous use of words, Thor. Really. Poetic, almost. “It would be----odd.” There was a reason he was never called Silvertongue. Loki had always been the more eloquent. Thor was typically about as blunt as the flat side of his hammer.

Clint grabbed his water bottle off the corner post of the ring and eyed him, both brows raised. “Yeah--no. She ain’t your little sister, guy. You don’t look at her like a sister. No one looks at Darcy Lewis and thinks kid sister. She’s a boss babe. Competence is hot. Doesn’t hurt she’s got an ass like a juicy little Georgia peach and a real dirty mouth.” He tossed Thor the water bottle and winked. “Now---I know my reason for not making a move. But what’s yours?”

“Perhaps sister is not the right word,” he conceded. Not the right word at all. Darcy was---like a little Earthling Goddess, she kept him grounded here for all that she was so softly human. “She is dear to me.” Dear, yes. Very dear. Thor let his eyes wander across the gym, to where Darcy was running in place on a wary beast she called the elliptical. Clint’s crude comparison of her was not wrong. Her ass did look like a---- “Would it not be...tasteless of me, to court the friend of my past love? It’s a questionable practice on Asgard. Speaks unkindly of the ladies kept. I could hardly bring myself to tarnish Darcy in such a way.” Sif had reminded him as such, had she not?
“Tasteless? Yeah - absolutely. And against whatever the uterine equivalent of the bro-code is.” Clint paused, brow scrunching. “Uh. Not that you need a uterus to be a chick. Sorry - you know how Darcy gets about that stuff.”

“Admirable of you to better yourself to the trials of women,” Thor said dryly - but indeed he did understand how Darcy got and agreed with her heartily. The Midgardian segregations of women and men were absurd. “You understand then, why I do not cast my gaze at her?”

“Uh one, yes, you do. You put your peepers all over her dude, and you are not alone. Two---Darcy and Jane are decidedly not friends. They should never have been friends. Circumstance threw two wildly different people together and they made do. Some more than others.” Clint ducked out of the ring, and Thor followed somewhat stupidly, as he paraded them along the edge of the gym, that they might look at her better. “Admirable of you to restrain yourself though.”

“Say perhaps it is not my sensibilities on the matter that stay my hand.” It was - mostly. Mostly.

Darcy may no longer consider Jane her comrade, but she does consider the woman's feelings.”

“So it’s Jane you’re sparing?” Clint looked over his shoulder, squinting. “I thought she dumped you?”

“She didn’t dump me,” Thor protested instantly, hackles rising. “I dumped her. It was a mutual dumping. And that isn’t—I mean to say, Darcy ---isn’t the sort. The tasteless sort. She wouldn’t have me. Not for Jane’s sensibilities, but for her own. She’s better than that.”

“Oh please. You and I both Darcy would ride you into the golden sunset if given even half the chance, Ponyboy.” Propping himself against the wall, Clint side eyed him. “I’m not sure Darce’ would have said no had you asked her while you were with Jane. She’s a good girl, great really, but she’s got impulse control issues and grabby hands. Millennial morals, millennial mindset, you know? All instant gratification now, and angst later.” Clint’s description of Darcy reminded Thor very much of Loki. “So - what’s the real reason?”

In truth - Thor knew the notions that stayed his hands. He had been with Jane. He had loved Jane. He had done great and terrible things for Jane, and for that love. He had left of his own volition yes - but Jane had left first. Jane had washed her hands of him while still holding his in her own. And it had hurt, as such things do, and the hurt had faded, as such things do - and that left Thor with a gaping void in his soul, a lonely little pit of misery. It wasn’t the absence of Jane specifically that hurt - it was the absence of anything at all. Then Darcy.
Then Darcy.

Then, Darcy.

That was the problem.

“I think...The best Midgardian way to put is...is...I fucked up.” Because Darcy deserved more than a footnote in someone else's story. “I fucked it up. I loved Jane.” Thor watched with pained fascination as Darcy dismounted the elliptical and began stretching - the spread of her thick thighs was a torture he absolutely deserved. “I loved her dearly until the very moment I didn’t. Darcy is----” What was Darcy, then? His friend, yes. Dear to him, yes. Far and beyond, better than him, yes. “She is no man's consolation prize, and if I was a fool to not choose her first then I am a fool who doesn’t deserve her.”

Clint had abandoned his starring of Darcy to look at Thor fully. “You don’t think you’re good enough for her.”

No - he thought they’d be very well suited. He thought...he could make her happy in a way he couldn’t with Jane. He thought he’d like nothing more than to see her sea-storm eyes light up like lightning every time she laughed - thought he could watch it forever. What he thought was - he’d chosen wrong, and he must live with that choice. Such was a lesson he’d only come to learn - living with the choices we make, learning and growing from them. Darcy had become something of her own cautionary tale for Thor, a constant reminder to think, then do. “Something like that, I suppose. And so she will be my friend, and I will be grateful to have that. I’ve told you my reasons, brother. What of yours? Do you feel the same?”

Pushing up off the wall, Clint turned his back to Darcy, walking backward away from Thor as he spoke. “Mine? Ah, well. I know I’m not good enough. Too old, too bitter. My weird and unhealthy relationship with my job. Also, my work wife Nat. But that wasn’t my reason for not going for it.”

Thor frowned. “Then what was?”

“You,” Clint laughed, as he spun on his heels and left Thor standing alone. “But if you’re not interested...” He shrugged. “I really, really am.”

I didn’t say I wasn’t interested, Thor thought, but he could not form the words. He stayed where Clint left him and watched Darcy grin up at the man from her place on the mats, back arched and
legs spread wide in one of her yoga poses. He hadn’t said he wasn’t interested.

He said he didn’t deserve her.

***

“I brought this for you.”

Darcy startled, tripping on her own shoe as she thumped on the light. She stood, keys in hand, in her own tiny foyer. “Thor! I wasn’t...I wasn’t expecting you.”

He set the little stone pot on the table. The flower curled itself toward him, tendrils reaching like a toddler’s arms and he pet them gently. It hadn’t blossomed - no, that was for lucky days. And it seemed Thor had few and far between of those. “I’ll go. I just...wanted to give you that.” It had been something like a week since he’d returned from Asgard, and Darcy was still very, very busy.

“Oh---you don’t have to go. Really --- I---Do you want some tea? Beer? Whiskey? Erik sent me some from Ireland.” She paused on her way to the kitchen, dress fluttering around her knees. “Thor? Are you okay?”

It was a nice dress, fitted and black, falling loose from her hips but tight around her breasts, cut low enough that Thor could see them in great detail. “You were on a date.” Her shoes made her taller. He didn’t like them. She had her hair down, straight as a waterfall, all her precious wild curls erased. “With Barton.”

“Yes.” She wrapped her arms around her middle. She looked hurt and Thor didn’t know what it meant - but he hated that he caused it. “I really like him, you know?”

“I didn’t.” Too sharp - Darcy didn’t deserve that. “I mean to say - You never mentioned harboring any great affection for him.”

“I don’t.” She shrugged. “I just like him. That’s how it starts, right? Gotta crawl before you walk. I really like him, and I could like him more in time.”
With Jane, Thor had never liked her. He’d fallen madly, hopelessly, dangerously in love with her from the start. And like all fierce flames, the hottest burn quickest. Thor liked Darcy. Liked her even when Midgard made no damnable sense when she’d handed him trousers with a smile and fed him sugary confections and protected him from government intervention. “I asked the Council of Nine to welcome a Midgardian Representative and submitted your name as is my right as the Earth delegate. We would leave for Asgard in six months.”

Darcy sat down. Right there, on the plush carpets of her sitting room floor, the loose skirts of her dress spilling out around her. “You want to take me to space?”

“To the Kingdom of Asgard, to represent Midgard.” He stared at the little-potted flower instead of Darcy. “We have not had a Midgard Council in...nine-hundred years, I think. You would be welcomed to initiate trade rights and the like. Call for aide. Whatever you think you need.”

“What the hell does Midgard have that Asgard would want?” She kicked off her awful shoes and stretched her legs out across the floor. “Seriously.”

“Nothing. Or food, perhaps. Your people are clever with food. Scarcity does that. No - you have nothing Asgard needs. But such is the way the Council is supposed to work. We could offer support - your planet needs it. Your technology is antiquated, your people are hungry, and homeless, you stuffer from draughts, disease...We cannot cure it all, even Gods must stay their hand. But we can help.”

“All for nothing.” Darcy looked at him, skepticism in every inch of her body. “Why?”

“Because I can.” Because Midgard had not had the aid of Asgard in too long. His Father had written it off as a weak realm, not worthy of their time. But Thor knew better. “One day - I will be King of Kings, and that means Midgard too, whether they accept me or not. I’d prefer to be the king who built a bigger house, rather than a bigger fence.”

“Six months?”

“Three moons on Asgard,” Thor explained. “Should be nigh six months here.”

Darcy fell silent for a long moment, and Thor watched the cat-clock on the wall tick and tick and tick. The shadows moved before she spoke again but Thor could tell you the passing of time. “Are you telling me this so I won’t pursue things with Clint?”
Yes. “Why would I do that? I had not known you intended too when I made my request.” Thor had only thought - Darcy would do well to serve Midgard, and too...he could show her his home. “I’m happy for you Darcy. Barton is...He is a good man.” Curious how one could lie and tell the truth all at once. He was happy for her. Barton was a good man.

“Yeah,” Darcy muttered, staring at the space between her feet. “Yeah--of course. Why would you even--- I should uh...I should probably grab a shower before bed. It’s late. It’s...I’ll see you in the morning though, right?”

“Of course.” I don’t know, Thor thought. Will you? “Perhaps...if you’re free, you might come to see me call the saplings for the bed.”

“Oh you haven’t already?” She looked up at him, red mouth parted in surprise.

He’d been too...too sad, to call to the light in them. And too - Darcy had grown them herself, had fostered them. She should be there. “I was waiting for you.”

“I’m sorry.”

And it ate at him. It hurt him. That he put anything as such into her head. That she thought she needed to be sorry. That she needed to apologize. When Thor was the fool, forever and always. “Nonsense.” He made himself smile. “You’ve been busy. I know your job is very demanding.”

“Thor...”

“It is nothing, Darcy.” He caught her gaze and held it. “Goodnight.”

***

Hours later, in the hazy time between moonfall and sunrise, Darcy crawled into bed with him. He wasn’t surprised that she’d found him - it was no more difficult than asking Jarvis. “You don’t have to stay here,” she murmured, rolling on her side to face him. “Come back.”

Here were he and Jane’s rooms, he and Jane’s bed, one floor up from Darcy, a sparse and barren space. “I didn’t want to...intrude on your time with Barton.”
“We went back to his.”

*Oh*. Thor closed his eyes. Tried not to imagine them together, and failed miserably. Barton was so short. Their bodies would not struggle to fit together at all. “Oh.”

Darcy sighed, and Thor felt the bed shift beside him. “I’m sorry. I’m—I’ll go.”

“You don’t have to go.” Absurdly, Thor almost offered to go instead - except he had nowhere else to go and this was still technically his bed. “Darcy.”

She settled back against the mattress, and Thor opened his eyes to find hers closed. “I won’t be so busy tomorrow,” she said on a whisper, pin straight hair spilling over her face. “Pepper’s doing some kind of Press Education class that I don’t have to go to since I’m already a total boss. So...you know. If you’re not doing anything...maybe we could grow the trees.”

“You haven’t any plans with Barton?”

“Nah - you gotta wait like three days between dates so you don’t look needy and shit. Midgardian Courtship rituals say so.”

“What a foolish notion.” He made sure to sound particularly haughty, just to watch her mouth spread into a sleepy smile. “The purpose of courtship isn’t to bely your desires but to show them.”

“Well what do you do on Asgard then, Mr. High and Mighty?” She opened her eyes and peered at him through dark lashes. “You didn’t really court Jane.”

“No. And such was my mistake.” Too Caught up in himself, Thor hadn’t bothered with customs particular to his people or their history. “As a Prince, there would be something of a public courtship, something for the people to romanticize and such. Asgardians love a ballad. But - there would be something else too. It would start...well. It would begin with a girl. Woman,” he amended. “Depending on who was courting who, really. But were I courting a woman, it would begin with flowers. I would make my choice blindly, and the meaning of the flower would dictate the rest of the courtship.”

“How eighteenth century Victorian of you.” Darcy pushed the hair out of her face. “They loved flower language.”
“I don’t know it myself,” Thor admitted, but it was the story of thing Darcy would know. “Indeed - it isn’t common knowledge on Asgard. Spoils the spirit of the ritual if you know what the flower means when you choose. Better for the Fates to choose.”

“And after the flowers?”

“A show of skills. Something I’m good at. My father would most likely choose, for public consumption. Something in the arena. Strength - one of my blessings, perhaps.”

Darcy huffed. “That’s kind of a lot to pick from though. How do you choose?”

“Depends on the lass, and the flower I suppose. Maybe I’d call the rains. A spectacular storm. And then spill the whole sky in rainbows.”

“You could always call to the trees,” Darcy suggested, quietly. “I thought it was impressive.”

And that she had, marveling with bright eyes as the new green buds burst open with fresh curling leaves. “Perhaps I could.”

“What next?”

“A different show of strength. Specifically, how I might protect my intended.”

Darcy hummed, and rolled to her side so she could look at him as she spoke. She always did that - always gave Thor her full attention. “So if you chose like...I don’t know. Tiger lilies...they mean pride. Confidence. Stuff likes that. How would you do your whole show of strength?”

“Pride,” Thor echoed, a faint smile spreading across his face. “I’ve been told I have too much. Pick a different flower.”

“There’s no shame in pride though,” Darcy argued, as was her wont to do on any subject. “If you can’t do it with pride, why do anything at all? Answer the question.”
“Fine. Were I to choose Tiger Lillies, and go into a courtship with confidence and pride---which would be terribly presumptuous and speculated on loudly across Asgard as being arrogant and cocky - I would probably....welcome any other suitors to a Warriors Battle and beat the tar out of them without the aid of my hammer.”

“How confident of you.” Her tone was teasing, and Thor missed it. “And after you beat the crap out of anyone looking to step on your toes.”

“A bid to the parents for blessings. If the lass was a commoner, I would aid her family. Perhaps in a shop, or on a farm.” Thor had always liked the idea of a common wife. His mother hadn’t been of a royal line and she’d made for such a fine Queen. “If she was of a royal line, I’d go to House or Kingdom, and negotiate alliance rights. A gift would be made - sometimes money, but usually something symbolic. I always thought I’d build her parents a house.”

“What if she didn’t have parents?” She murmured, eyelids fluttering closed once more.

Thor startled, frowning. “Then I suppose I would beseech any she called family, and offer my aid there.”

“What if you already do that?”

“What?” Thor could see the sleepy spread of her body and quieted his voice to a whisper. “Darcy?”

But Darcy did not answer, soft in sleepness beside him.

Thor watched her for a long time before sleep took him too.

Chapter End Notes

if ur name is Hannah and you like supernatural and you live in the Midwest and once worked at an independent pizza shop in the burbs of Indianapolis for a strange woman who liked your bangs, while you were a senior - sup.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

this isn’t where I planned this chapter to go but here we are.

I feel like I’m losing readers. Sadness! let me know what y’all think. I love hearing all your big long introspective comments.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What is this place?”

“My magical lady cave,” Dream-Darcy explained from her perch, propped on her arms belly-up on a glistening black rock. Thor was fairly certain he’d heard her use that expression before, but he never thought it meant an actual cave. She didn’t open her eyes as she spoke, content to bask in the pale moonlight from where poured in through the overhead opening of the cave, and made rainbows in the waves of her hair. “And somehow you’re in it. Don’t tell me you finally decided to accept my invitation. What are you doing here?”

He was standing, waist deep in a river that flowed uphill. The water was black and rippled in white moonlight. “Funny,” he muttered, staring at his own distorted reflection. “No matter where I am, I never seem to know the answer to that question when asked.”

“Then your answer should be ‘having no idea what I’m doing here’.” She opened her eyes and stared down her nose at him. “A familiar concept for you, I’m sure.”

She had her legs spread wide, the color pink the brightest thing inside the cave. Thor looked away from her, away from anything at all. The caves of the wall glistened like broken shards of glass. “You’re always bare in my dreams. You’re not usually so mean, though.” Indeed, she sounded like Loki.

“Well, you can hardly blame me for that. They’re your dreams, aren’t they?” She rolled onto her belly and held her chin in hand. She looked so much like the bored mermaids in the frescas of the Aviccian River on Asgard, Thor half expected her teeth to be sharpened points. “What do you want, Thor? Do you even know that much?”

“I want to have chosen you first.” Something slithered under the water, curling itself gently around his ankles and Thor found he couldn’t move. “Jane was a mistake.”
“Then perhaps I should thank her.” She sounded just like Loki - his cadence bleeding into her voice, the accent Darcy couldn’t fake with any kind of credence. Darcy laughed, a bright and merry sound that echoed against the walls of the crystalline cave - that much, at least, sounded like her. The things beneath the water shifted and wrapped themselves around Thor more fully. “She spared me being your mistake instead. Imagine if it had been me to waste years on some woe-is-me space brat with a hero complex and daddy issues. Boooring.”

“I---But I’m changed,” Thor protested, startling as something else curled itself around his other leg. He splashed, panicked in the water, struggling against their grip. “I’m---different. I’m not like that anymore. I’ve learned---” Darcy slid into the water, submerging herself in a million spreading ripples and disappearing altogether. “Darcy? Darcy!”

“You are changed,” she admitted, reemerging only a scant inch from him. “You are more. I see that, you know. I see you. I always have. The Thor Before,” she sang, dragging cool fingertips down his belly, below the water. She didn’t touch him there - but Thor could feel her hands anyway. “Wasn’t worth waiting for. But here we are now. Different. Changed. Here we are now - you and I - and you stand still.”

“I can’t afford to make any more mistakes.” Thor struggled to reach out for her, to move with her as she moved away. “I don’t have the privilege.”

She tutted, and swam another circle around him. “Your faith is remarkable,” she mocked. “You don’t believe in me.”

“Of course I do,” Thor protested. There were days when all Thor truly believed in were Darcy and her good heart and strong spirit. “It’s myself I don’t believe in. What if I can’t...” What if he couldn’t what? Lead? Rule? Unite kingdoms and protect the realms? Take his father's power or position? Watch his friends die, a millennia before him? What if he couldn’t bear it? “Darcy...what if I can’t?”

“How can you expect anyone to believe in you,” Darcy sneered, lips curled back in disgust. “When you can’t even believe in yourself? You use to be confident. You use to have pride!”

“Too much!” He jerked against the creatures slimy binds and found them unyielding. “It was nearly my downfall.”

“And now you have none, and it shall be the same.” She ceased her swimming, and stood in the water, black tendrils swirling around her beneath the surface but never touching. Her eyes darkened,
sea-storm blue to thunder-cloud black and Thor felt real fear. “Hva holder deg tilbake, Thor Odinson? What holds you back?”

The words - they weren’t Darcy’s words. Thor nearly didn’t catch it for the All Speak - but the language was older and more familiar to him. Norse, perhaps. Or older. “There are---things in the water---”

“Regrets and doubt and fear. They don’t hold me back.” She pushed away from him and caught the current of the river. “Goodbye, Thor.”

“Don’t leave me,” Thor begged, pulling at the slimy restraints. They slithered up his sides and grasped at his wrists. “Darcy, please don’t leave me.”

“She can’t wait forever,” she called too him. “She’s changing, too. Her thread might split and weave where you can’t follow. She’ll get older, and she’ll die and you’ll still be here - standing still. Doing nothing. Making no choice for fear that it is the wrong one. It’s pathetic, really.”

“Get out of my dreams, Loki! “Thor growled, pulling with all his might but not even the Gift of Strength could break the binds of his own self-doubt it seemed. “Loki!”

“I’m not really here,” Loki laughed, with Darcy’s mouth. “Neither is she. This is all your head, brother. This is all you.” Her face shifted, Loki falling away to something more pensive, something more Darcy. “It’s only you here, Thor. You’re the only one left.”

She dipped under the water, and did not reemerge again. Every second she was gone, the cave grew darker. “Please don’t leave me,” Thor called again, quieter this time, and broken. The water was rising, higher and higher now, to his chin. “Darcy--- please .”

“Thor?” He heard his name, but her mouth didn’t move and she floated up and away and away even as she called for him and her cries echoed against the cave. “Thor? Thor--- It’s okay---It’s okay, you’re okay----”

Thor opened his eyes to the visage of Darcy’s, face made strangely blue in the moonlight pouring through the---through the window. Not the mouth of the cave. She was leaning over him, hair spilling across his chest, brow scrunched with concern. Nothing so haughty as Dream-Darcy, who had looked at him with disdain. “Darcy. Darcy---”
“Hey, it’s okay. You’re okay.” He pulled her against him, desperate to make her real, to keep her in place. She did not fight the bonds of his arms but laid against his chest, head tucked beneath his chin, hand cupped over his heart. “It’s okay. You’re okay. Do you want to talk about it?”

“No,” he said roughly, into her hair. “No, I just---”

“This is fine,” she assured him before he could find the words to ask. “It’s fine. Whatever you need.”

“I’m not like I was before,” he said, stupidly. Foolishly. “Don’t you think? I’m not like I was when I first came to Midgard.”

“You were a snob and a brute,” Darcy agreed, and Thor felt it like a punch to the gut. “No - you’re not the same. I don’t think any of us are. But that’s like - that’s just life. That’s growing up. Learning. Changing. Making mistakes.”

Making mistakes. Of that, Thor had much experience. He’d been so sure of his manhood, of his growness, when his father cast him to Earth. He’d been so sure of Jane. He was a fool, and a young fool - then and now. “I’m younger than you.” True, but...but what in the bloody stars would compel him to say that?


“I think---I’m younger than you, or close in age to you. I’m not entirely sure how to calculate it.” All that he could be certain of was that by Midgardian standard - he was young.

“Thor---I’m only twenty-four. You’re like---”

“Yes but...” Thor laid his head on the pillow, let him sink into that material comfort and took heart in the way Darcy sank into him. The clock on the bedside table told him it had only been an hour or so since Darcy had slipped into his rooms. “The Aesir are long-lived. I am...I am young , Darcy. For my thousand years - I have scarcely lived. Fate be willing, but I’ve an eon ahead of me. I first realized the day I left Norway - Jane is...older. At a different stage in her life. It wasn’t so long ago that Midgardian’s would have considered me an adolescent.”

“Ballpark though, how young are we talking?” He felt her smile against his chest. “Are you like---barely legal? Are some of the things I think about with you considered felonies?”
“I don’t know what that means,” Thor admitted, laughing. Of all his time on Midgard, Darcy still managed to confuse the All Speaker. “I don’t know how to measure such things, but I think I must be near your age and...”

“And what?” She had tilted her head back and the breath of her words felt warm across her throat. “What?”

Darcy would turn twenty-five, twenty-six, forty and Thor would remain as he was. “You...are so capable. Your life holds so much promise. Every day, you make a difference. You’re doing something for the world. And I spend my time living off my father or my friends. I bring nothing to anything at all. So much so - when my father fell into the long sleep, his powers did not shift to me. The Fates looked unto me and said no.”

Not yet, the Council would tell him. Not yet, Loki had said. But Thor wondered - what if never? What if the powers never shifted, and Thor did not take his place on the Throne of Asgard as the King of Kings? What then?

“You---Are you kidding me? You actively protect the world, Thor! And all the other worlds!”

“There’s considerable downtime to heroics. It’s nearly a hobby.” Idle days. So many, many idle days. “Tony and Banner...the Captain...the others. They aren’t only heroes. They aren’t only anything.”

“You’re not just a hero. You’re a prince and a God and my friend and---Thor, are you okay?”

Are you okay - she’d asked him that before. Upon his latest return from Asgard.

I don’t want you to grow without me, Thor thought wildly. I don’t want you to outgrow me. “I want to help you with the Ambassadors. As your foreign dignitary, or your friend or - whatever you need. Muscle. Experience. I’d like to help.”

“Like a job? You want a job?” Darcy rolled onto her belly, like she had on the rock, and looked down at him. “Really?”

“Yes.” Thor dragged his beard over her hair, smiling when she squirmed. “I want to...contribute. I
want to make a difference. I was chosen to make a difference. I---I can. I can change things. You said that I should be a God worth believing in. I want to do that.”

Her face softened and the Loki-esque one of his dreams seemed harder to picture. “You already are.”

“No one believes in us, Darcy.” He shook his head, smiling sadly. “I remember what it feels like, to be filled with the righteous faith of prayer. The chorus of their quiet cries inside me. It was a beautiful sound - like rain, or waves. It felt like a thunderstorm. Soothing. It gave me sense of purpose, a pulse. I remember the pulse, the thrum of pure belief. It is gone from the world. I am empty of it, like so many of my kind. But I would...I would like to serve well as a God anyway. It should not be done for the faith, but despite the lack.”

“I could...” She pursed her mouth, and they were so close now - always so close, really. “I could help you, you know. We could figure out what the World would need of a God or a King.” Darcy paused and propped her head in her hand. “What are you in charge of on Asgard? Or like - when you were doing God stuff. What were you in charge of?”

“I’m the God of---”

“I know what you’re the God of,” she cut him off, gently. “But what did you do with that. Were you in charge of all the rain?”

“Different God for that. Or rather --- a group of them. There is a balance to weathers. A rhythm I could not seem to find. Always seemed a bit like theater acting. They weren’t fond of me.” They often said Thor did not respect the art. And that his thunder was disruptive. Hm. “My lightning has always been used as something more like a defense tactic.”

“And your strength. Presumably used for protecting.”

“And moving your furniture,” he added, dryly. “Darcy, I’m largely considered a War God, as was my father before me. Thrice Blessed usually come on more comely sets. A Seer might also be struck by empathy and Dreamwalking. Things like that. Those who can call to the Earth might also have a particular way with animals or healing. Fertility was sort of the odd one out, given my others.”

“ Weird.” He raised his arm just enough that she could nestle down into the bend of it and for that one moment - things were okay between them. “I mean - fertility seems like the biggest one...”

Thor did not try to stifle his smile, only let it be hidden in the shadow of night. “Do you think so?”
“What good is protecting a kingdom full of people you can’t keep fed? You said you…you said it’s better to build a bigger house than a bigger fence. Do you call to spring? Husbandry for the animals - ensuring cattle are born healthy and such. And crops.” Her voice shook as she spoke and he let his fingers curl over her arm and hold her more tightly. “You had armies to fight back your enemies but only you could promise they’d survive. That your people might not starve. You always say that Asgard is plentiful in all things - that’s because of you Thor. You do that. You’re the reason they survive. Wars will always come and go - but your kingdom has lasted.”

“I don’t…I don’t think so. I mean - it’s always been plentiful.” An oasis, lush and green where no one starved. Asgard was a prosperous kingdom. “There has always been a Fertility God on Asgard.”

“And right now it’s you. And you’re responsible for healthy births—”

“Only a babe wanted shall get,” Thor murmured, wondering. Perhaps there was some small merit to Darcy’s words. There usually was. “The number of people on Asgard is significantly smaller than Midgard, or even most realms. Only a babe wanted, shall get. There are no unwanted children born into my kingdom. We are few, but we are mighty.”

“Shit? Really? You’re in charge of population control?” That she would be impressed by such a small thing made him smile once more into the dark.

“Some Fertility Gods took more pride in producing the most babies.” The one before Thor had a love for red hair and multiple births. “But I’ve always thought - bring nothing into this world you’re not ready for. Every child on Asgard is wholly cherished.”

“How does it work? How do you just---prevent it? Like, people are doing the do, dude. How do you stop babies from being made?”

“I don’t know,” Thor admitted, honestly. “I use to hear them pray, and if their prayer was made in truth faith, a blessing was granted. On Asgard, I don’t know how it works. But no babe unwanted has ever been born. Some few have died in the womb,” he added, somberly. “A change of heart. A few. Not many. Such is the sacrifice for the blessing. Even more rare is a wanted baby lost.”

“Do you think it would work on Midgard? Because like - we need a little willful population control and if it was based off what people actually wanted…that would be amazing.” She made a face.
“Current birth control is privileged and scrutinized. There are way too many unwanted babies up on this planet. I would know.”

Thor shrugged, and Darcy shifted closer in the curve of his arm. “They have to believe that it will work. They must believe in me.”

“I believe in you,” Darcy said, with frank sincerity and Thor thought that was true. Darcy did believe in him. “Does that mean no accidental babies for me?”

The subject soured his stomach, but he made himself answer anyway. “As your God?” As her God - Thor would serve her well. Anything she wanted, and nothing else. “Nothing you do not desire. In all things, I will protect you.”

“My plants got sad when you went to Asgard.” The segue seemed strange, but Thor accepted it. Darcy knew the path of their conversation and that was enough for him. “I think they miss you. I know you talk to them.”

“It’s hard not to talk back to something that’s talking to you, in a sense. I can hear them. They love you.” Darcy’s plants were consistently happy things, unlike the potted ficus in the lower lobby that sat in the corner radiating absolute indignation at every passing person. Thor had tried to call to it once and found himself wholly unwelcomed. It reminded him of Colonel Fury.

“I don’t know how anyone can look at you and not believe,” Darcy sighed, and Thor understood perhaps, her mention of the plants. “I mean - you’re abnormally gorgeous, for one.” She looked at him, eyes roaming up and down his prone body. “Yeah. And. Uh. You have a magical hammer! You fly. You bring the epic hand of thundering electric smackdown on baddies left and right. There is like - footage of you battling space monsters and robots. There are hundreds-of-years-old stories about you - like legitimate documentation.”

“In the interest of fairness, there are no particularly accurate tales of my earlier Midgardian adventures.” Thor hummed, the last trembling vestiges of his dark dreams fading. “Indeed - there may be few of my more recent adventures, given your governments’ interventions.” He ruffled her hair - the tips starting to re-curl with time. “Seeing is not always believing, little girl.”

“Fine,” Darcy muttered, tucked under his chin, the warmth of her breath spreading over the center of his chest. “But can’t they feel you?”
“Always.” She spoke on a whispered breath, and the reverence in her quiet voice choked him.
“Sometimes I can feel you so much I can’t even look at you. It’s too much. It’s like...something inside me that wasn’t there before. I don’t know how anyone who’s met you couldn’t.”

He wanted to believe her, wanted to believe the heart of her called to him like in the Olde Days but it had been so long, Thor wasn’t certain there wasn’t anything in him left to call too. Like as not - Darcy was like his brother and felt all things deeply. Nothing so ethereal. “Not all have half as much faith in me as you do.” It was painfully true, and Thor was twice as grateful for her companionship. “I would know if the Midgardians decided to take up in the belief of me. I would feel it.”

“I’ll pray harder,” Darcy promised, sleepily. “Tell me when you can hear it okay?”

He did not want to discourage her sweet words, could not bring himself to say - he’d never hear it. There wasn’t enough faith in the world to light the fires anymore. There was no chorus of prayer. He rubbed at the ache in his chest, manifested perhaps by all his melancholy consideration of lost Gods. The world had forgotten to believe. What was one drop in an empty well? “You’ll be the first to know.”

“You wanna drag this mattress up on the roof and sleep under the stars?”

“Very much, yes.”

***

Thor carried the mattress, Darcy trailing behind him with a bundle of bedcloth. They laid it near the edge, where the sun would rise first. “Think it’s gonna rain?”

“Not on us. Not tonight.”

“I wouldn’t mind a thunderstorm sometime though,” she hedged, curling herself down into the bend of his arm once more. “I liked to dance in the rain when I was little. Always made things feel better.”
“You need only, and I’ll call the clouds.”

***

The seedling sprouts had gained some inches all on their own in the week since Thor’s return, but they were not keen to see him. “Is that how it is?”

“Is that how what is?” Thor crouched beside the box and reached out to pet the new curl of little leaves. The particular sapling all but huffed at him, all indignance and pride. Such was the way of oak though. Thor never could figure out if they learned it from him, or him from them. “There’s no need to be rude.”

“Problem child?” Darcy hummed, standing in the doorway of the bedroom. She was wearing a white dress made of the soft stretchy cotton she preferred and it hugged her curves in a damnably distracting manner. White looked good on her. Little flyaway curls escaped the confines of her braid, laying rebelliously around her sweet face. Short of a flower grown, she looked exactly like what Thor always imagined the Spring Mother would, supple and soft and plentiful.

“It wants its mother.” He beckoned her over with an open, outstretched hand. “Come talk to it.”

She came, but she protested, taking his hand and kneeling beside him. “I can’t hear them though...”

“But they can hear you,” he assured her, distracted at the plump swell of her thighs beneath her where she knelt. They looked thicker like this and Thor—should have worn the denim trousers instead, if only for their restrictive nature. “You needn’t speak aloud. Touch them. They will know.” He took their joined hands and led them to the little sapling. “Call to it.”

“I don’t know how. Thor --- I can’t.”

“You can,” Thor promised, holding the whole of her hand in his own, and moving their thumbs to brush the petals. “You need but ask. They know you. You brought them to life, Darcy. You nurtured them, you loved them. They felt it. Call them. They’ll hear.”

She closed her eyes, like in prayer, and Thor watched her with rapt interest. Come on little guy, he could almost hear her call. I need throne for my King.
Thor startled, nigh throwing Darcy’s hand from his own. A stupid thought, he chastised himself. This wasn’t a throne, it was a bed, and Thor was not Darcy’s king. Foolish of him, as always.

“What--What? Did I do something wrong?”

“No!” He grabbed her hand again, in both of his, and held them gently. “No---static, I think. My apologies. Continue. It's...whatever you’ve said. It’s working.” Thor could feel the little sapling, pride in spades, struggling to grow, reaching out for Thor to carry it. The others perked up, keen to follow the call of Darcy’s voice. He wondered what she was saying, nothing like his foolish imagination pictures surely. Whatever it was - it worked. “You’ve a knack for this. Come---you can help me bring them to light.” He pushed up from his crouch and pulled her to her feet.

She hesitated, turning to look at their little oak children. “I don’t know...”

“It’ll be like before, in the park,” Thor wheedle, tugging her against him. He liked when they were chest to ...well belly. Darcy’s chest did not reach his own. He liked her body against his, too much. But he liked the way she looked, so small beside him. “You’ll feel it.”

“I don’t need to say anything?”

“Whatever you did before, worked well. Do that.” He tugged her to the foot of the bed and stood beside her. He crouched a bit, to rest his chin atop her head, fully wrap her in himself. “Here will be best. Go on. Call to them.”

She swayed before him, and Thor held his breath. “I...I feel like I should be kneeling.”

Denim. Restrictive denim would have been a far more ideal armor than the soft, striped sleep pants he hadn’t bothered changing out of. “If you insist.”

And so she kneeled, right there in front of him, facing the bed. He’d never seen her like this, the tapered angle of her waist, the bowed curve of her twin claves, her two little feet pressed neat together. Her ass never looked so much like a heart. Thor felt his pulse race and beat a double measure in his chest.

_A Throne for a King_, he thought again in Darcy’s voice. _An altar for a God._
Better she be kneeling and facing the wrong way, for he was certain he’d never been harder in her presence.

“Call them,” Darcy murmured to him, and Thor scarcely managed to pick out her true voice from the one he kept inside his head.

Thor did as she asked, raising both hands and summoning the light in them to seek his own. They stretched up, displacing dirt from the box and cracking the redwood frame in their race to grow, grow, new bark prickling and new green curls of leaves uncoiling to spread and flutter. Soil spilled out across the hardwood as the trees grew beyond their frame, bigger than he’d intended or imagined. Darcy reached out and touched the nearest one, calming it, stealing it, and Thor felt it as if she’d grabbed him by the cock, soft, warm palms caressing the damnable core of him. Overhead, the branches tangled and weaved, braiding in and out from each other in a canopy of fresh leaves. Branches curving from the head of the bed to the sides, like arms. The roots unfolded into stairs, a shape Thor had not considered. It looked like a throne or an altar, only massive. When the trees - great grown oaks bowed in supplication - came to a still, the bed was more than Thor ever imagined, even bare of a mattress or bedcloths.

Darcy still remained, sprawled now on her knees before this...this alter. “Is it always suppose to feel so...so...”

Sexual, Thor thought she meant. He felt it too. “No.” Sometimes. Not always. It really depended on what he was doing. And ---apparently, who he was doing it with. “My apologies.”

“No its...” She made a sound, low and throaty and Thor wanted so badly to call it a moan but that way lay madness. “I mean...I don’t hate it.” She leaned forward to rest her forehead against the steps and Thor felt his bollocks draw up at the indulgent sight of her. “I’m fairly certain I came.” She shifted, thighs tight together. “Yeah--no. I absolutely did.”

Thor was fairly certain he was going too if she continued. “Such things are...are considered homages to Fertility gods.”

“Well then I pay you a lotta homages,” Darcy hiccuped and then snorted. “I didn’t mean to say that. Am I supposed to feel this loopy?”

“Mortal,” Thor reminded her, as he collected her gently from the steps. “Such things are a bit much I suppose, for mortals. Are you well?”
“I’m fantastic.” She allowed herself to be lifted, going luxuriously limp in his arms. The soft, pliant give of her body made him ache madddenly, as did the roam of her hands where they petted at him. “Thor, I am high as fuck.”

“Yes,” Thor agreed. “An oversight on my part. You’re very talented at Calling. I didn’t expect you to be so good.”

“I came harder than I did with Clint and he had his actual dick in me. Magical space orgasms, man. Who knew?” She let her head fall back, over the curve of his arm and her smile was almost infectious. “Is this a Fertility thing?”

Thor snorted. “Not hardly. It’s very much a Thor thing.”

“All that and you didn’t even touch me? Daaaaamnn, Odinson.” Her hands left him to roam over her own body and somehow, that was impossibly worse. He should move - should carry her to her rooms. But he did not, standing still instead at the foot of his alter-bed. “I don’t know how Jane got anything done when you were ever there. If you were mine, you’d have to wear me like an accessory, I’d never get off your dick.”

Thor nearly dropped her, and in an effort to prevent such travesty, held her closer, harder. “Darcy!”

“I think about it,” Darcy told him, sloe-eyed and laughing. “Like---all the time.”

It wasn’t anything Thor never suspected. Darcy was very vocal in her appreciation of him. Even when he’d been with Jane, she’d been exceedingly complimentary. “You won’t like this when you’re back to right,” Thor hushed her. “I can’t have you avoiding me again. What an awful time.”

“I was upset. You hurt my feelings.” Her lashes fluttered to a close, and her smile faded. “I thought about you when Clint was fucking me last night. Made him take me from behind so I could pretend it was you.”

Thor had to set her down. He was going to drop her, or throw her down and fuck her. And that would be---wrong. That would be wrong. He set her to her feet and caught her when she swayed. “You have too---Darcy. You have to stop. I mean stand. You have to stand. But also stop.” She didn’t comply at all, just leaned against him when he held her by her hips. “Little girl...”
“I like it when you call me that.”

“Than I shall endeavor to call you such more often. I promise it, if you’d only stand on your own for a moment.”

“Turns me on, kinda.”

Thor closed his eyes. “Darcy...” He was hard against the soft give of her stomach and she knew. “This isn’t how I imagined having you.”

“You imagined it?” When she looked up at him, she looked so hopeful. It was a moment he didn’t deserve, that he would cherish regardless.

“Every day,” he swore to her. “Waking and dreaming. I wondered what it would be like to have you beneath me. Not like this, with you out of your mind and like as not to forget it all together. I don’t know how to have you and stop, little girl. So it’s better if I never have you at all.”

“You have to know...”

“I don’t deserve you,” Thor told her, leaning down to press his forehead to hers. “I failed you the moment I chose Jane and I cannot undo that. I cannot make it right. And so I do not get to have you.”

“I thought Gods were all about atonement.” She sounded alarmingly less slurred. “I think I’d let you ask for forgiveness.”

And who was this girl to offer an God forgiveness? Darcy was a woman unto her own, nothing like Thor had ever encountered. Thor was...Thor was weak to her.

“You reckon I’d beg and plead?” Thor laughed, but the sound spoiled with despair. “Get on my knees?”

“As long as you’re doing it while getting between mine,” Soft, tiny hands reached for him and she cupped his face, the smooth pad of her thumb brushing over his mouth. “I’d forgive you anything.”
Thor swallowed and felt his hands slip up her body, from her hip to her waist, to thumb at the underside of her heavy breast. “I feel my gift for Strength failing me,” he admitted, sucking in a sharp breath when Darcy moved to stand on her own, on two strong legs. “Are you...are you still...”

“High as fuck?” She blinked up at him, mouth pursed in a little frown. “Um. Considering I’m like...horribly embarrassed all of a sudden, I’m going to say no. Decidedly not.”

“Why are you embarrassed.” Thor could not be asked to form the proper inflection to make such words a question, not when he was brushing his thumb over Darcy’s hard nipple.

“But he wasn’t going to turn her down. Fool that he was for saying yes, or fool that he was for considering saying no - he wasn’t going to turn her down. He couldn’t. He was weak. Spineless. A wretch. “I can’t even tell myself no, Darcy, I’d be a hypocrite to rebuff you. The last of my convictions was to deny myself the luxury of you,” he said, even as he ground his hard cock against her soft belly. “Some God of Strength I am...Darcy...”

“Beg forgiveness.”

Thor groaned, too loud in the quiet of the room, and held her too fiercely against him. “Darcy...”

“But between my knees,” she added, with a little laugh and to his End, Thor would swear it was the laugh that broke him.

“I don’t deserve to touch you,” he murmured, even as he all but pushed her back against the steps of the bed, and fitted himself between the sprawl of her thighs. “Everything about you makes me want to do better. I should be stronger than this.”

She touched his face again, held him like something precious like he wasn’t twice her size. “I was taught all sins can be forgiven in prayer. You just have to want it.” Darcy leaned forward, nearly bringing their mouths together. “Don’t you want me to forgive you?”
“Yes.” This was what it felt like to break apart. Thor thought. A starburst - that is what she’d rendered him too. Thor felt like would burst. “I don’t think it works that way for the Gods. There’s no one to beg atonement.”

“Let it,” Darcy breathed, digging her fingers into his hair and pulling. “Pray to me.”

Chapter End Notes

worst cliff hanger or WORS cliff hanger?
As a God familiar to the other side of the veil, Thor had no first-hand experience of prayer, and so he kissed her instead. He reveled at the sublime vindication; it was *everything* he had imagined, and more. From the sweet plush give of her lips opening to his, the velveteen slide of her tongue and the sharp, to the shocked shudder of her breath stealing against his own. Divinity had fled him long ago, like birds on the horizon - but this? This was *redolent*, worship in it’s most exquisite form. How could it be anything else, with such decadence in the languor? Thor had fallen upon many mouths in his millennia, but never sweeter was a forbidden fruit as was Darcy’s kiss. He came to his knees before her, felled by that one kiss as easily as on a sword or blow. Defeated. Baten. Conquered, but not vanquished.

When she touched him, delicate, clever hands brushing the underside of his taut belly, he bit her in surprise.

“I’m sorry,” he murmured, pressing the words across her cheek and throat. “I’m *sorry*.” Not for the bite - she liked that. But for being forever the fool. Her dress had slipped high on her thighs and Thor pushed at it until it pooled around her hips. All the Gods, but she looked *divine*. Spilled across alter steps, half-bare and kiss-bitten.

“Do you know what you’re sorry for?” Darcy asked, with heavy-lidded eyes. “Sometimes I don’t know...and sometimes that’s better. It's easier to mean it, I think. Easier to forget.”

“I don’t want to forget.” Thor admitted, savoring the sweet dry kisses she scattered like falling stars across his collarbone. What had Dream Darcy said? Thor could never really remember. But he knew the message all the same: the Thor Before. “Every mistake is a lesson. Better to remember and learn.”

"It's more than mistakes, dude." She kissed his mouth once more, a small nipping thing that left him wanting. “Not everything comes down to good or bad, right or wrong. The choice we make, they're not always just mistakes or otherwise. I think...I think some things just hurt, and other things hurt for a reason. The lesson is in the pain.”
And Thor supposed that was true. He had learned much from Jane and calling her outright a mistake or regret did no justice to the either of them or the moments of love he shared. Wisps of his dream curled like smoke in the back of his mind. Perhaps he did not choose Darcy first, because the Thor Before...wasn’t for Darcy at all. She mightn’t have chosen him. Older now, by nothing at all, and a scant wiser...perhaps the wait made him ready, and worth it.

“There was a Goddess in Asgard, the Lady Hedonia. Far before my time, was she, but her tales are forever known. She was named for pleasure.” He let his rough hands glide up the insides of her pale thighs, smiling when she let them fall farther open. “The joining of bodies was a homage to her.”

“Patron saint of yours?” Darcy asked, as his hands slipped up her dress, fingertips catching on her clever Midgardian underthings.

“No, but I paid many respects none the less. Like myself, she was known for being plentiful.” He let himself touch her like he wanted too, the sweet full curve of her ass - lush enough that even Thor’s handspan could only just encompass it. Touching her was a choice, a fate sealed and one he made peace with and welcomed. There was a balm in the surrender. A relief in succumbing. “She bathed in rivers of milk and honey, and for Hedonia, all cups runneth over.”

“Never pegged you for a chubby chaser,” Darcy hummed, lifting her hips up enough for Thor to pull at her knickers. “Jane was so---”

“No Ghosts between us, not here. Jane was Jane,” Thor hushed her, the sharp prick of hurt piercing his heart. Night and day, Jane and Darcy; never should comparison fall between them. “Sunrise and falling stars are both beautiful, for all that they’re going in different directions. Jane is jane. You are you, and I would be a liar if I said you hadn’t caused me a distraction from the moment I met you. Your body...” Thor leaned back on his haunches, so that he might better look at her in all her lazy glory, knickerless and half dressed beneath him. “Goddess weep, and men grow nervous.”

Darcy touched his mouth, lifting his chin from where he was still looking at all her constant curves. “That one doesn’t translate.”

“You ever look at something so beautiful, you fear it?” Thor couldn’t help the clench of his hands, where they gripped her full hips. “To know you is to see you, and to see you is like looking into the heart of a burning star.” She gasped, but he did not release her, moving close again, pushing her legs apart to fit himself tight between them on his knees. “And so I say...I invoke the rites of Hedonia...for even as I gaze upon you in all your abundant glory, I know the Goddess weep, in envy of such beauty. But men? God and mortal alike? We fear what makes us weak.”
“You’re not weak,” Darcy cried out, when Thor hauled her up with rough hands, to press against him. “Thor!”

“For you, I shall be. Let weakness be my lesson.” He let one hand release her hip, to dip and tangle into the wild curls of her hair and pull. Darcy’s lashes fluttered at that little hurt, and Thor felt a little bit cleaner of his sins. “I’m not supposed to have this, for all that I want it. But you asked, and I can deny myself...but never you.” He kissed the corner of her open mouth, tangling his hand tighter in her hair just to feel her nails bite into his skin. “Such an embarrassment of riches I'll never share.”

Darcy’s plump thighs lifted themselves up over his hips and Thor appreciated that kind of forwardness in bed. “I didn’t peg you for a jealous God either.”

“Perhaps not.” He had to laugh. Not so long ago, he’d have said the same. “It is my nature to be giving. But let me be your jealous God,” he begged of her between little kisses. “I’ll worship no others before you.”

“I don’t think that’s how it works.” She pulled against his grip, but Thor did not release her, and she smiled; a slow, sweet spread of her full mouth and it made Thor ache to be inside of her. “I’m supposed to worship no others before you.”

“That too. But if I’m your God, you can be my temple,” Thor shivered, and brushed his mouth over her cheek, desperate to have her closer, crushed against him. It was wild, to speak as such. It should have been blasphemous, should have soured his tongue to the taste of her but it felt right. To have her was a blessing, and Thor would treat it like nothing else. “Would you like that, little girl? You be my temple, and I can come inside you?”

Darcy closed her eyes, mouth falling open with the faintest little quiver. “Oh, God.”

“Yes,” Thor agreed, forcing himself to pull away if only enough to draw his hand between the valley of her breast, down her belly to tug at the soft fabric of her pretty white dress and reveal her. “I think I like it when you call me that.”

Darcy huffed. “Then I shall endeavor to do it more,” she mocked, opening her eyes just enough to look down at him from her higher step. “Are you going to touch me or what?”

The shameless nature of her sprawl, legs akimbo and wide open, made him dizzy with want. A
fearless creature, this Darcy. Nothing so shirking, no clutching at the absent bedclothes, no shy blush, or closed thighs needing to be gently coaxed around his shoulders. “Hush. I’m marveling at your beauty.” How often had he dreamed about the color of her cunt, after all? More than he’d ever admitted. “Curve and bends and valleys - fate designed you in the likeness of the Mother Earth herself.”

“Please, you’re not even looking at my body. You’re marveling at the beauty of my---”

“You’re bare,” he explained, a curious curl in his voice as he pushed his hands up higher on her thighs, framing her center. “Hairless, I mean. That is a...Midgardian custom? I don’t remember it being so before.”

“Jane wasn’t----”

Thor pinched her, hard, on her inner thigh. “No ghosts.”

“Do you like it?” Darcy asked instead, spreading her legs a little wider instead of mentioning Jane again. In truth, Jane hadn’t been bare like Darcy. She’d kept to the Olde ways like much of Asgard.

Did he like it? Aesthetically he...how did Darcy say it? He didn’t hate it . Indeed, the sight of her bare little quim made his stomach clench and his skin feel hot. She looked...so small. Too small. And yet - Thor knew she’d make space for him. “I keep thinking, this is the hardest I can possibly get and then...you prove me wrong.”

Darcy laughed and pushed her legs wider apart and proved him wrong once again. She was so pink-sunset pink. “You’re supposed to be praying, remember?”

Thor swallowed and continued his shameless staring. All the minutes he’d denied himself this single moment - always the fool, Thor was. And to think he ever thought he stood a chance at not succumbing . It was a marvel he made it this long before finding himself between her thighs, truly. He put up a good fight. A respectable resistance was made. No man would mock him for his failure, not when the battle was dear Darcy and her sweet----everything. She had come to him, and she had asked - lesser men would not have made it so far. “I imagine I do that with my mouth, correct?”

She slipped her little hand over the back of his neck and drew him forward. “Kiss me first.”
“Anywhere, in particular, I should kiss?” He slipped his hand between her thighs, drawing his thumb down her cunt and ---and--- “Stars.” He couldn’t stop himself from pushing two fingers inside of her all at once, just to feel the tight clench of her. She was already so wet for him. Ripe. Ready. It wouldn’t take anything at all to push inside her, spill inside her. “Darcy...”

“My mouth.”

“Are you very certain?” He needed to taste her. Feel her bare skin wet against his mouth. Gods - but he needed to taste her. She kissed him, biting at his lips, and Thor needed that too. Her little body curled against the push of his hand, taking him in deeper and Thor thumbed at her clit, an electric thrill coursing through him when she cried out against his mouth. “Can you take more?”

Stars - but she was very nearly riding his fingers and Thor couldn’t---it was almost too much. He felt too big for his skin, sure to burst with all the things she’d grown inside him. She had her elbows braced behind her on the steps, holding her weight, the strong curve of her thighs over his hips flexing, moving to meet him and ---and--- “More what?” she asked, breathlessly, head tipped back - *Sweet Hedonia in the Sky* - covet the girl cast in your likeness.

“Fingers,” Thor explained, even as he pushed a third inside of her. It was almost too much, but she took it so prettily. Her body opened up for him like a flower blooming. “You’ll need four before I can take you.” Thor was big. Thor was very big, and Darcy...

So deliciously small. Tiny, compact body in miniature, plentiful perfection. The contrasts of their bodies, his hard and sculpted, her soft and smooth - he loomed over her, casting her in his shadow for all that she was his light. Gods---but she looked so good, writhing below him, moving to meet him, fucking herself on his hand, growing wetter with every thrust.

“Gimme four then,” she demanded, moving faster, beautiful tits bouncing and Thor---did not deserve to pay witness to such glory. Not even a little. But perhaps he could try his very best. Perhaps he could endeavor to be good enough. “I can take it. Make me take it. Please. Please.”

Make me.

*Oh*. Thor grasped at his own cock through the soft sleep pants, bollocks drew tight, threatening to disgrace him entirely. *This is what religion feels like.* Sweet sanctity, anointed in the commingled sweat of their skin. *This is what it means to pray.* To want without knowing fully what it is you desire, and to be provided for all the same.

When Thor was not swift enough in compliance, Darcy pushed her own hand between her thighs
and let her fingers join her own and Thor very nearly came upon the sight of it. *Never*, never in all the women he’d bedded, had he seen such tenacity in a lover. Too much, he thought, pulling her hand away and pushing his forth inside of her. Darcy didn’t seem to mind, moved her clever fingers to rub at her own clit instead and Thor thought Grace didn’t feel so good, as the clinch and heat of Darcy’s pretty little cunt.

She cried out, moving faster, taking what she needed, too fast and too rough, riding the edge of hurt and pleasure alike. He let her, blessed to see such unchallenged beauty. But another day - he would play her body to her own despair, and her cries would be sweeter than any angels chorus. He would write poetry upon her skin with his mouth, and pluck her strings until she quivered like a harp. “I’m gonna come.”

“Yes,” Thor agreed, fucking her harder, curling his fingers inside of her just to watch her cry out, back arched, as she clenched and shuddered around him. He needed her desire more keenly than his own and found the balm to his soul in her pleasure. *This is worship.* To kiss her was sacrament. To touch her, a credence. To giveth was to have, here and now, in this their bodies. “You are.”

Outside, the clouds swelled in the sky, fat and full, promising to burst. Darcy’s thighs tightened around his hips, her busy hand working faster as her back arched, and her body quaked and the sky broke in a riot of color and rainfall. He kissed her crying mouth, fingers curled inside her body as she trembled with the aftershock of her own culmination. She was dripping, spilled across the steps, lush body gone limp, chest heaving, curls askew and Thor had never seen anything so transformative. He felt *changed* - gutted and refilled.

There was a knowledge in him now, that he had not yet come to understand.

He could not help but taste her offering, lick it clean from his fingertips while he watched her sated smile and sleepy gaze come back from the brink of pleasure. “We’re still dressed.”

“I am absolutely pegged as an impatient God,” Thor admitted as he stood, letting her tug his breeches down, the soft giving cotton catching on his cock. “I couldn’t be bothered with my own garments when you were here. I did say you were a constant cause for distraction.” She didn’t hesitate to touch him, and Thor was certain he never looked so big in any other hand. The contrast of her cool palm against his hot length was maddening. “Darcy...”

“This is going to hurt,” she said, but her voice held no fear, but anticipation in spades.

“Yes,” he agreed, incapable of lying to her. And in truth - the fire in her gaze said all that was needed. Pain - a lesson and a balm. Collecting her up into his arms with no effort at all, Thor
replaced her with himself on the steps and deposited her in his lap. She weighed almost nothing at all, but still, her small form felt substantial, and sturdy, where she perched over his knee. “Take only what you need. Nothing less, nothing more.”

“When are you gonna learn, Big Guy? I want all of you or nothing at all.” And so she did, reaching between them to pull his heavy cock to her cunt. She lowered herself upon him in one swift arc of her body - all of it, all at once. The women of Asgard had struggled more and took less, but Darcy was a girl unto her own, with a supernova soul made to make space for him and him alone. The shock of pain across her face hurt his soul and burned his belly all at once; indeed, it nearly hurt him, to find himself inside her, so quickly, so rightly. Fully seated, she held herself still, tiny feet hooked over his knees. “Oh God - that’s... oh.” Reaching out, Darcy braced one hand on his bare chest. “That’s...”

“Yes?” For his part, Thor leaned back against the steps and held himself equally stationary. There were times and places for taking what he wanted - in manners Darcy would greatly enjoy- but this was not one.

“I’m gonna feel this for days,” she managed, words slurred on a moan, her head tipped back, hair tickling Thor’s thighs where the tips danced across his skin.

He felt himself twitch inside of her at the thought, bollocks tensing. “Body of a Goddess and you’re perched on my cock like a Queen on her Throne. I like a strong woman.”

“Yeah but my throne’s a prince, so maybe call me Princess,” she teased, leaning back a scant fraction, and stealing all the breath from Thor’s body. “Fuck ,” she cried, moving in earnest. Slow, smooth rolls of her round hips. Thor held tight to the steps, feet braced against the floor. “Fuck - Fuck . Thor--- touch me .”

And so he did, curling his body up to crash against hers, crushing her down upon him, moving with her and against her like waves on the shore. “Easy,” he begged of her, nails biting into the soft skin of her back, desperate to still her or calm her or hurt her so prettily, mark her body so that when the dream ended he could find proof in the truth. “Easy, easy .”

She folded against him, heavy breasts crushed against his chest, arms wrapped around his neck. “Nothing good is ever easy,” she managed, between breathy little cries, fucking herself down harder, against the cage of Thor’s arms. Over and over, little body trembling, and the strength in her was beautiful and shocking all the same. “Oh God---I can’t---"

“But you can. You are ,” Thor marveled, letting his hands fall to her hips to guide her, faster and
harder - and she took it. He could feel the pulse of her cunt over his cock, a metronome beat of hedonic pleasure. “You are---look at you. Like you were made for it.” All of it, every inch of him, the harsh, jarring collision of their bodies; Darcy took it and made it beautiful. “Look at you, princess. You were made to worship.” And Thor could not say, not then nor ever, if he meant she was made to worship or worship others. He grabbed her by her hair and yanked her head back, the sudden clench of her cunt almost painful where it clutched at him. Darcy cried out, and came in a torrent over his cock, drenching his bollocks even as she milked him in the aftershock of her body. He hadn’t expected that, had only fell desperate to hold his own and she---a proper little War Goddess, to eat pain and spill pleasure. Thor was no match for her - he was well and truly beneath her in all things. “Darcy---Darcy---”

“You’re turn,” she murmured, pushing his hands from her hips to her thighs, little fingers cupping his own, forcing his grip. “Help me.”

He lifted her up, as she had asked so sweetly, and dropped her down. Again and again, Darcy’s fingers tangled in his hair. He pushed up, feet braced against the steps, fucked up into the fall of her body, too hard by half, but she cried out, and kissed him, biting her pleasure across his mouth. “I forgive you,” she murmured, against his mouth, and Thor burst, came like it was stolen from him, like she’d ripped it from his body. Lightning flashed across the sky, and the windows rattled. Darcy looked down at him, from her perch, her wild curls haloed in lavender lighting bursts and Thor understood in that one moment, what it meant to be a God.

***

They’d fallen asleep in a tangle, like lovers are wont to do, and when they woke it was only half-three, with the sun still high in the sky behind lazy latent thunder clouds. They hadn’t had it in them to drag themselves to Darcy’s room, but made due on the floor in a nest of linens Thor had found in the bedroom closet. Across the room, their new bed -still without a mattress- stood tall and proud, fresh green leaves fluttering in a phantom breeze. It was indeed an altar, Thor could see it now. Instead of a footboard, there were steps, and their chosen oak trees had bent themselves to form an arch. It was lovely, and very much Darcy’s doing, for Thor had only ever wanted for a bed. A gift from her to him, like all things about her, Thor would cherish this too.

Darcy stirred beside him, mother-bare but for the sunlight spilled across her body. “I feel like I should hurt everywhere, but mostly I just feel really, really good. The kind of good I should feel for days.”

“If it wears early, do inform me. I’ll do my best to replenish the feeling,” Thor mused, half distracted counting the freckles on her shoulder.

Darcy huffed, the tips of her hair ruffling where they laid across her face. She opened her eyes,
lashes fluttering. “You’ve changed.”

“I’d like to think so.” It plagued his every waking and dreaming out - had he changed? Had he learned nothing?

“No I mean---like, Physically.” She sat up beside him, crisp pale linens pooling around her tapered waist. “Thor, you’re bigger.”

Thor looked down his body, for some sign of a change - but he couldn’t tell. “No...certainly not. The only cause for that is a power shift.”

Darcy shifted, turning to look at him fully. “Thor - I spend like...an inordinate amount of time looking you all over, up and down.” She raised a brow when Thor smiled at this. “I’m telling you - you look....more...”

Thor sat up beside her, unease bubbling in his gut. “More what?”

Darcy shrugged, and looked up at him. She did seem...smaller, some how. “Just more.” She looked around them, digging through the sheets to extricate his pants and her dress. “Here, let’s just get dressed and go talk to Tony. He’s got specs on everyone.”

Thor caught her by her hand when she stood - and already knew something had changed. She was smaller, he could feel it in the way his hand dwarfed hers, but only because he had grown. “This isn’t how I want this to end.”

“Nothing’s ended.” She leaned down - only just - to kiss him sweetly. “I’m not really looking to be a one-night-stand kind of girl anymore. Well. Except for Clint. I should probably talk to Clint.

Thor winced. “To be honest, I’d forgotten about your...date.”

“Same, dude. Same. Which - kinda shitty on our part.” She grimaced, and shrugged, even as she pulled on her dress. “It’s cool. He’ll deal.”

“I’d be remiss to cause any tension among the team, let alone among friends,” Thor hedged. Remiss,
but not quite enough to feign an apology. He couldn’t bring himself to feel sorry, this side of the bedsheets with Darcy.

“It’s really no big,” Darcy gestured to his pants, pointedly. “He has a wife, you know? And two kids. Two lives, really. I thought it could be fun, but it was never a love match.”

Thor felt indignant on her behalf, enraged especially for had he not said Darcy’s worth was more than just second place anything. “I’m feeling particularly less remiss now.”

“Come on,” she cajoled, raking her fingers through his hair. “Get dressed.”

Chapter End Notes

this ties in with Chapter Four of Darcy Does and will be more relevant to this story later.

Not as raunchy as chapter 4 in DD. Thor keeps getting all whimsical and poetic. Which is probably good for the first time.
He needn’t friend Stark’s opinion to confirm any change within himself - Thor’s soft stripped sleeping pants were a good few inches short above his ankles. Yet no amount of grumbling for afterglow would be still Darcy’s need for further endorsement. She merely donned her pretty dress once more and pulled her hair atop her head with deft, practiced hands.

“Sooth my delicate human sensibilities,” she argued, little hand on her full hip. “This is kind of weird in my book. And my book has chapters on the Einstein Rosen Bridge and alien invasions.”

Thor looked down at her, farther than usual, and conceded to the blue of her eyes. “It is not so strange a thing, I assure you. Physical Asgardian manifestation isn’t so linear. My father used to be far larger.” But even so, Thor too was concerned. He truly had heard of such things - indeed his father had been a mountain of a man once, in his prime. There were others - Heimdall was a stout fellow, towering with the Seeing Eye typical of his God status. Even Loki loomed above a great many, thin as a whip but home to great power. Such things rarely happened without reason though, and so Thor wondered, static crackling at his fingertips - what had changed? “To the labs, then.”

“Wait---wait,” Darcy came to a stand in the hall joining their quarters, arms raised lazily at her sides. “Carry meeeeee.”

“I’ve indulged you too much. Your ensuite elevator goes to Stark’s lab directly.” Still, he scooped her up like a bride, reveling in her delighted shriek. “Do you---are you well?” There was no delicate way to ask about such things, but he could spare a little decorum to ask. “Are you in pain?”

“If you’re tentatively asking if I feel like I’ve been fucked with three cans of spaghettios at once, the answer is yes,” Darcy confirmed, shifting deeper into the bend of his arms. Thor was hit with a sense memory, still fresh, of her body against his and the way they moved together. “But like...in a good way. 10 out of 10, would ride again.”

“Oh. Well. As long as it’s good,” Thor replied mildly, marveling at the infinitesimal weight of her in his arms. He lifted her up with one hand like a free weight and laughed when she clutched at him. Above him, and below - she had held her own against his weight, had taken up against him with such ease, it astonished him now to hold her tiny form and find her but a wisp in the wind. “How is it that you can be so impossibly solid, but weigh nothing at all? You’re as stalwart as any two warriors but I’m certain you weigh less than my best pair of boots.”
“I love all your weird alien space prince compliments.” She snorted and kicked her foot up to knock against the elevator button. “For real. Swoon.”

“We can’t all be as poetic as you, Princess.” Thor leaned against the wall of the elevator, the smooth, electric hum soothing as it soared higher up the tower. “What was it you demanded of me once? To throw my ass into a spin?”

“A circle. Throw that ass in a circle. I like a three-sixty picture.” She laid her head on his shoulder and fiddled with the collar of his stretched-thin shirt. “Speaking of pictures, we should schedule a photo shoot. I’ve done some with the rest of the team. You know. Something curated, to sort of suit you. Tony did a thing in the lab like some kind of mad scientist- it was pretty sweet. Steve tried to teach me parkour. Less sweet.”

“Park--” Thor shook his head, as the elevator dinged lightly and the doors opened with a gusty woosh. Some things would never fully translate. Thor thought the word tasted more European. “Lightning is hard to photograph.”

“True. And since I’m taking the pics - the team isn’t fond of press or photogs - it’ll be even harder. So, let’s not to the lightning schtick. The whole idea is to make you seem more human anyway. Er.”

“But I am not human.” For all that his shape - if not size- was the same, Thor would never be human. He was a child of the Aesir, and though he had learned in his time on Midgard that such a thing did not make him better, it did make him different. No amount of humility could change that. “And so - what shall you do with me?”

“The people don’t forget your human,” Darcy murmured thoughtfully, almost to herself. One of her rebellious, wayward curls tickled Thor’s neck where it brushed and he thought he could grow use to such things. “They know you’re not. You’re this amazing, wild alien space prince. They forget you’re a God.”

“And you would remind them, with pictures?” Thor didn’t doubt the capability of a permanent image. Indeed, a great many Goddess and Gods were captured in fresca, throughout the palace. Thor carried her out of the elevator, and through the corridor to Stark’s antechamber.

Darcy let herself be set to her feet, leaning up on her tiptoes in such a way that Thor’s body obeyed the wordless command on reflex and leaned down to meet her in a kiss. It was --- strange. Sweet. Unusual. Familiar in concept, if not design. They’d kissed - very recently for the first time - but the heat of the moment had tempered the brazen freshness. Thor kissed her a second time, cradling her head to hold her in place, just because he could. How phenomenally novel, to kiss Darcy outside
the dream world. And even more curious, more resplendent, was to know in truth, the feeling of her kiss in return.

Strange, too. Easy in a way that nothing good was. There was a modicum of suspense to it - like the last moments before planets align, anticipation dissipating as the dust settled on new world wonder. Thor could kiss Darcy as he pleased, and she would let him and it would be easy and good and right. And that - that was the strangeness. They’d been friends. Affectionate friends, who had tumbled into bed together almost accidentally with some small measure of magical intervention. It was whim that turned their coin. What was, very nearly almost might not have been at all.

“ Weird.” Darcy blinked up at him, mouth still a little pursed. She was still on her tiptoes, the weight of her body resting against Thor’s hand, where it had moved to curve, and span across her back. “That was kind of weird, right?”

“Peculiar,” Thor agreed, with a furrowed brow, his other hand still tangled lightly in her hair. “But not unpleasant. Simply…”

When Thor had no simple explanation, Darcy shrugged and flashed him her beloved half-smile. “Maybe this is what kismet feels like.”

“You speak of fate?” Thor was familiar with Fate, with the call of Destiny. It had never felt so tangible before. Merely born into him, a part of him present since his creation. This was different - all starburst suddenness and finality.

She shrugged again and pressed her hand to the recognition pad beside the antechamber doors. “I mean...maybe this is just what it feels like when you finally get exactly what you want.”

***

It wasn’t. It couldn’t have been, for when the doors to friend Stark’s labs opened with their usual melodic little chime, Jane was a vision against the wall, a spectre holographic frowning face. There was very little else Thor wanted to see, so freshly fucked and wearing trousers inches too short with a shirt threatening to burst. He felt foolish, tumultuous guilt and residual anger still bubbling along the surface of his mind. Jane had hurt them both, Darcy and Thor - but taking up together still seemed tawdry, somehow. There was no regret in the joining, but the stain Jane left on them, both good and bad, might never be gone.
He very nearly turned around right then and there and left, but Darcy stomped on his foot before he had the chance. “Doctor Foster,” she said frostily. “Tony. Sorry. I didn’t know you had...a guest. We’ll go.”

“Uh - how about no? Thor is big. Why is Thor big.” Tony didn’t bother with niceties, never had been a man for formality or form. His eyes were on Thor, even as he pushed past Jane, thick brow furrowed, his mustache twitching. “Bigger. Hm. Is this about the centralized thunderstorm over the tower last night? I was just consulting with Foster.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest. “Maybe. Why’d you ask her anyway? You know Thor kicks up stardust from time to time.”

“She knows storms. Thor’s storms too. This wasn’t anything like that,” Tony nodded, amenable to Thor’s occasional burst of static and storm. “Like pileus layers over an orphan anvil cloud form.”

“Tone it down for the peasants Shakespear,” Darcy snapped her fingers. “Your fancy words mean nothing to me.”

Tony snapped his fingers right back at her. “You worked for Foster - you understand exactly what I’m talking about. Pileus veil over Orphan Anvil,” he sniffed at her, looking as haughty as Thor had ever known him to be. “It’s not even a thing. And yet, there it is.”

Darcy tapped the holoscreen housing the data Stark had collected and Thor saw the storm, a dense deep purple cloud formation misted in a spiderwebbed white veil over the tower. It was beautiful and nothing like Thor had ever seen or created before, flashing with bursts of a very familiar pink.

“How early did the Castellanus start forming? Like what - fifteen, twenty minutes prior?” Darcy asked, proving Stark for the right. She knew exactly what he was talking about.

Thor didn’t. The words translated somewhat through the All Speak, as Asgard had names for such clouds, but he’d never bothered to learn their specificities and so the science was lost on him. Loki would have known. As children, they would often lay in the fields, staring up at the fat, fluffy clouds rolling over the head. As Thor called out the shapes - bilgesnipes and bosoms- Loki would ruin the joy by saying things like *Nubus Crinitis.*

“Closer to thirty,” Jane chimed, from her holoscreen. “Thor’s storms have never presented with Castellanus before.”
Thor must have made a noise. Darcy looked over at him, a smug little grin on her pixie face. “Castellanus clouds are like... the first sign of atmospheric instability. Thirty minutes, eh?” She winked. “That early in?”

Thor flushed deeper, heat and soft embarrassment burning his face. Atmospheric instability - in truth, Thor felt unstable from the moment she put her soft, little hands on him. “It is as Jane says - usually, there is none.”

“I’ve charted his particular lightning bursts - I’ve got readings on every single strike he’s landed on earth since touchdown. Last nights storm? Something else entirely.”

“Nope. All Thor,” Darcy glided past Stark, head high and shoulders back - all regal confidence in the face of a betrayer. Would that Thor had the wherewithal to feel so strong - mostly he just wanted to turn tail and leave, even for all that Jane was a shade, flickering where she lay flat against the wall. “Have you ever seen a storm like last night’s, Jane?”

Jane’s eyes flicker to something beside her - a screen no doubt, menial readings, a quash of numbers. “I mean - I can see some finite parallels to Thor’s cloud forms, but these were significantly more dense, with only a single lightning strike, just at the culmination and precipitation burst. This was torrential! Most of Thor’s previous readings didn’t even have rain. Maybe two or three, and that was presumably due to current weather patterns already facilitating rainfall. This was like nothing I’ve ever seen.”

“All Thor,” Darcy said again, holding Jane’s eye. “You’re sure you’ve never seen anything like it? Not in all your time with Thor?”

Oh. Thor looked down quickly to hide his sudden smile. Darcy was --- Darcy was inquiring as to whether his time with Jane was ever so earth-shaking. “I can confirm,” he managed to say without any laughter. “I summoned no storms as such, while with Jane.”

Darcy smiled, not so keen to hide it as Thor was. “Bye Jane,” she said, before tapping the correct button to send Jane’s spectre blinking out of existence. “Fraternization, Tony? I’m hurt.”

“Considering you’re the only reason Foster is even still employed by me, I didn’t think you’d care.” Tony shrugged, so like Darcy in style. “She knows storms. What’s a guy to do? What was up with that anyway? That wasn’t anything like Thor’s electric sparkle smackdowns.”
"I do *not* sparkle. I summon ancient powers. It doesn't sparkle. Mine is a very dignified and coveted gift, I'll have you know."

Darcy’s eyes skittered over to Thor, only for a moment, before she returned to Tony. “We were fucking. It was *that* good.”

Tony spun on his heels, smacking a hand over his eyes. “Oh jeez. No. I don’t need to know that. Why would you tell me that? Wait----” He peeked at Darcy over his shoulder, face gone shrewd. “Weren’t you and Clint---- Seriously Darcy? That was like yesterday.”

“Okay, number one - how do you know about that already? Number two, Captain Judgmental, put your eyebrows down and ask yourself - are you offended or impressed?” She winked at Thor, smirking mouth spread shamelessly. “Hot and Hotter. Am I right? I’m a girl with options.”

Thor frowned, but reminded himself that of her options, she’d chosen him. Hm.

“I don’t want to be impressed. Stop it.” Tony pouted, tossing a wrench across his workbench in disgust. “I heard you turned Barnes down?”

She hadn’t told him that. She’d told him that Barnes was a friend and a guard and that there was nothing else there. Darcy’s smug expression tumbled from her face. “You guys gossip like old women.”

“So it’s true?” Tony adopted her smirk, and Thor was struck for the first time at how alike they were. Familial almost, for all that they were not related in the traditional sense. “Why the byway with Clint? I bet actual money that you’d turn him down. I thought with all the goddamn white dresses you’ve been wearing, you were saving yourself for Thun----”"

“We’re done here,” Darcy cut him off shrilly, and Thor could feel the tension thicken in the room. “You got someone we can consult on Thor’s weird growth spurt, or not? Because this shit is weird, and I’d rather not send him back to Asgard just yet when I only figured out how fun it is to sit on his dick, dad .”

Tony blanched. “Yeah, I know someone. Got a guy over in Greenwich. Jarvis, flash the info for Doctor Dumbass, Master of the Mystic Bullshit.”
“Very well, sir.”

“You’re a dick.” Darcy’s jaw clenched, and Thor moved to touch her, soothe her, but he had no idea how such things would be welcomed and so he stayed his hand. “This is why I won’t let you adopt me.”

“You should still consider it though,” Tony hedged, any apologetic essence in his tone gone with a new subject. “Pepper has everything ready.”

“Maybe. But we both know if you bet money on me turning Clint down, you bet more on Thor. I want the money. And I want you to think about why it’s fucking weird to bet on my sex life. It’s weird for anyone, but it’s weirder for you.”

Tony threw up his arms, and Thor almost laughed. “There’s a learning curve to parenting, I’m doing my best!”

“I’m twenty-four!” Darcy threw her hands up too, but Thor caught the little smile. “I don’t need a dad!”

“Yeah but you want one,” Tony grinned. “And I’m a middle-aged, billionaire with no interest in child-rearing but mild paternal intrigue for twenty-four-year-old soft science majors. Stop telling me about your sex life, and I’ll stop monopolizing on the niche market created by gossipy superheroes. You only do it to watch my internal crisis.”

“Which you only have because you’re the gossipiest motherfucker in the tower.” Darcy tucked her hand over the bend of Thor’s arm. “We’re going. Your guy in Greenwich better be legit.”

“Yeah, he’s a legit fucking weirdo. But he knows his shit, unfortunately. Don’t touch his cape. It’s weird.” Tony squirmed, awkwardly, as if remembering something with only distaste. “Seriously. Don’t touch the cape.”

Darcy stared at Stark for a long moment. “Four years ago, my biggest concern in life was not getting roofied at parties.”
“That and six college credits,” Tony reminded her, and Thor knew the words but didn’t understand the meaning. “Funny how the world works.”

“Worlds,” Darcy corrected, turning a sweet smile up at Thor. “How the worlds work.”

***

“177A Bleecker St,” Darcy read aloud, standing on a cracked, dirty sidewalk. Together, they looked up at the tall, narrow double doors, painted a flat matte black, their golden street numbers slightly askew. “Well. This is it. I don’t know why, but I expected more. I can’t see Tony slumming it in a townhouse.”

“He doesn’t,” a tall, lean man with slanted eyes and sharply sculpted facial hair explained, from the parlor they’d suddenly found themselves in. “Usually he sends a summons and I refuse to reply until something blows up.”

“So like---six or seven minutes?” Darcy reasoned, looking nonplussed to find herself in another room entirely. A most admirable trait, to roll with such punches. One of her many admirable traits, really. Thor did not share it, jerking wildly as he found his footing again. She threw out an arm, and steadied his elbow, without so much as pulling her gaze from the strange man.

“We made it eleven minutes, forty-two seconds once,” the man said, with a wistful sigh. “I am Doctor Stephen Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts. He is Thor Odinson, Crowned Prince, heir to the kingdom of Asgard. And you... I don’t know you.”

“God of Thunder, Fertility, and Protection.”


“No,” Darcy said, with such an uncharacteristically stern voice, that Thor felt compelled to lay a hand over her narrow shoulder. “He is Thor, God of Thunder, Fertility, and Protection. You left that out in your weird little introduction.”

“Oh. Of course.” Doctor Strange blinked, mouth pulling into a frown. He was very finely dressed, and Thor was thankful for the clothes Darcy had found for him, dark denim trousers and a coat fit for
“She’s not a P.A.,” Thor supplied, unhelpfully. He didn't think she was. He wasn’t sure what P-A stood for. “She’s the Avengers Ambassador, and her work with world peace is important.”

“No of course,” Darcy cut him off, narrowing her eyes as she stepped forward, out of Thor’s gentle hold. “No of course. If you’re going for formal introductions, you can’t leave out the most important.”

The Doctor took step back, and Thor thought perhaps hostility wasn’t the most politic way to beseech help and so he followed them, reaching out once more to take Darcy’s hand.

“Most import---.

“Darcy,” Thor hedged, speaking low. “It is of no significance.”

But Darcy would have none of it, leaning forward into the Doctor's space. “Do you rank a King above a God, Mister Strange? I thought you were supposed to be smart. Ugh. Come on, Thor. This guy can’t help us if he can’t even---”

“But no one prays to the Olde Gods anymore,” the Doctor said, slow and even, but no different than the times Thor had said as such. Still, it filled the well of shame in him, to be so thusly forgotten. “My apologies, Miss...”

“Darcy Lewis.” She had squared her shoulders, so like a little bulldog standing between Thor and the Doctor. “And I pray, thank you very much.”

“You do,” the Doctor echoed, and then they were somewhere else - upstairs, judging by the window, in a room filled with endless rows of books. “You do pray. I can see it in you. And in him. Something happened last night. I marked the power shift. The storm over the tower?”

“Powershift?” Thor reeled back, fingers clenching helplessly in Darcy’s hand. “Powershift from where? Was it my father---”

“He sleeps,” the Doctor cut him off, shaking his head. “No - this power is older than Odin, older than Asgard, even. Surely you feel it? Your body was forced to make space for it.”
“Did you just---Are you porting us?” Darcy blinked wildly, color high in her cheeks. “That is---woah. Like. Wow. Is it suppose to feel like that?”

“In a sense,” the Doctor explained, eyes narrowed at Darcy. “Some do not manage it as well as others. Are you going to be sick? This rug is six hundred years old.”

“No?” Darcy blinked, eyes skittering up to Thor and back to the Doctor. “It’s kind of turning me on actually? I thought the first time was just a fluke, but no, that’s like...Damn...”

“Is it really?” Doctor Strange stood taller, eyes drifting up and down Darcy’s form. “I’m sorry - who are you?”

“Darcy Lewis, Avengers Ambassador for World Peace and The Midgardian Representative for the Council of Nine Realms,” Thor said for her, looking considerably down at the good Doctor. “And you were explaining a power shift.”

“Right.” His gaze doesn’t waver so much as slither from Darcy to his wall of books. “A single form can only house so much. One will grow to accommodate. Surely you’ve seen such on your home planet? Would you like a beverage, Ms. Lewis?”

“Uh---” But then there was a cup in Darcy’s hand, a small, dark blue, porcelain cup with no handle, steam billowing from the murky surface. “The only tea I drink is like...ridiculously British.” And then the cup shifted, white porcelain with a pink damask pattern, pale milky tea sloshing inside. “What the fuck.”

“A spell,” Doctor Strange explained, with a slight half-smile, both smug and curious all at once. “Designed to give you what you want. Coffee, perhaps?”

Gone was the porcelain, and instead a paper cup, the top piled high with the fluffy cream and dark chocolate sprinkles Darcy so admired. Thor felt compelled to smack it straight from her hand. “Wait--anything?”

“Think it, and it’s yours.” Thor didn’t like the Doctor’s smile at all, nor the narrow of his eyes as he watched Darcy’s close.
She was holding a shot glass when she opened them, amber liquor filled to the top. “It’s not even noon,” Thor hazarded a guess, even as the glass filled itself a second time and Darcy threw that back too.

“We’re about to have a heavy conversation about why you grew...what...six inches, overnight? I think a shot or two is justified.”

“A shot or two.” Thor watched her raise the glass again and took it before it could fill once more. “We both know well and find I’m going to carry you home, but you’re a great deal squirmier after you’ve had a few.”

“Yeah but you kind of like it, right?”

“Are you old enough to drink?” The Doctor cut in, a thoughtful hand raised to his chin. Behind him, his red cape caught a breeze Thor did not feel.

“I’m twenty-four.” Darcy sounded amused. Thor didn’t like it. “Anyway - you were saying? Super hot alien space bodies make space for what now?”

“Thor took into him a great deal of power last night.” He spoke to Darcy, and not Thor at all - and as a Prince, that...made Thor feel weird. “He grew...six inches, you say? What about overall mass? Was it just height?”

Darcy took her time answering, turning her body to look up, up, up at Thor, and then down, a slow liquid gaze that slid and lingered. “Um. I can’t confirm in the entirety, but I’d say he’s bigger all over. Further investigation required.”

“That is a significant amount,” the Doctor admitted, stroking his chin thoughtfully. “The power was old.”

“It is familiar, the power,” Thor explained, quietly. “Like home is familiar. It does not feel out of place, even for the suddenness. Growth is usually incremental, even with an influx of power.”

The Doctor pulled another book from nowhere at all, paging rapidly through it. “It was invoked,” he told them, with a furrowed brow. “I felt the call before the storm came. You were calling to it, summoning it. What were you doing?”
“Nothing so intentional.” Begging forgiveness, on bended knee. “I was...We were...praying.”

“Praying.” The book snapped shut, and the Doctor raised both brows up high across his considerable forehead. “You were both praying. Together. To whom? Your father? Patron Gods?”

“Only me. To her.” Thor mightn’t have ever admitted such a thing - it felt blasphemous to even say out loud - but to deny the truth was to diminish his apology, the very act upon which he fell to his knees and trembled at her touch. “I begged atonement.”

“Thor,” Darcy laid a hand low on his chest. “You don’t need to tell him...”

“Actually,” the Doctor cut her off, curiosity splashed across his face. His mouth was open as if poised on a question and then they were deeper into the townhouse, higher now, in a darker room, gas lamps flickering. “Actually. You need to tell me more. You need to tell me everything. Every detail. Something was invoked last night - possibly accidentally. Something very old, and very strong. A notable amount of power came to Earth - to Thor. I say notable, for if I noticed...others may have as well. Strength calls to strength. It would serve us all well to know what kind of power.”

Thor raised Darcy’s glass and watched it fill itself, before knocking back the burning amber liquid. Darcy took it from his hand and knocked back a third shot. “We should probably be sitting.”

And then they were, in high back chairs, cloistered at the edge of a small round table. Darcy moaned, lashes fluttering. Thor scowled, turning a narrowed eye to the Doctor. “Stop that.”

A notebook fell open on the table, and the Doctor scratched a note over the clean blue lines. “Ms. Lewis’ aptness to channel power is interesting. Especially given that she is wholly mortal. The human form isn’t necessarily built for such things - but there are exceptions.”

“It’s a gift,” Darcy said, sounding for all the world just a little breathy. Thor took her hand, pointedly, into his own, and the trembling grip of her fingers made his stomach flip. Whatever the witch was doing - it was indeed turning her on.

“It is, indeed,” the Doctor noted, mouth pursed. “You said you were praying. How did that come about?”
“We were building his bed,” Darcy offered, frowning. She looked at him, for support perhaps. “He was...growing the saplings we planted.”

“You planted,” Thor corrected, nervous to fail in the details. For all that Thor liked the man less and less with every passing minute, Doctor Strange was correct. Power called to Power - it would serve them well to know what it was they summoned, what it was Thor took unto himself and how.

“For you,” Darcy insisted. “I...We picked out these acorns a while back, to grow these trees for Thor’s bed. While he was on Asgard, I planted them. When he came back, he grew them...aged them...”

“I called to the light inside them,” Thor explained, awkward, hoping for all the worlds that the damn witch would understand his meaning. “Does that makes sense to you?”

“I’ve heard of Asgardian life-songs,” the Doctor accepted. “And I have some small understanding of that particular gift of yours. So you called them to grow.”

“We did,” Thor tipped his head to Darcy. “For a mortal who cannot hear the life-song herself, Darcy is particularly affluent in calling to life. She helped me.”

“I just sat there,” Darcy argued, as was her wont to do in all things, forever. “I just sat there and sort of...imagined what the bed should look like.”

Thor reached for the shot glass and found himself holding a bottle instead. He took a long drink, before handing it to her. “She made an altar.” He knew. He knew, even in the moment, that it was significant. Darcy had raised a alter to him, and he was - forever and always - a fucking fool.

“What, no I didn’t!”

“Darcy.”

“I didn’t...mean too,” Darcy amended. “Maybe I was sort of thinking about it, when you were calling the trees. I was also thinking about a throne! What does it matter?”
The scratching of the Doctor’s pen stopped for a scant moment. “It matters a great deal, actually. You raised an altar to a God, Ms. Lewis.”

“Oookay,” Darcy drawled, wide-eyed and pale. “Look - I’m not the Master of Mystic anything and I’m not a thousand years old so dumb it down for the human. I didn’t even do it. He did it.”

“You planted them? You grew them from the acorns? You chose the acorns?” The Doctor gave her a knowing look. “You raised an altar to a God, Ms. Lewis. And then you prayed on it.”

“He prayed on it,” she replied mulishly, into the bottle.

The Doctor made another note. “You didn’t pray at all? Not even a little? Not even inside your head?”

Thor wanted very much to leave the room, and hide from the very stupid thing he did. “You said... You...invoked. My name. Several times.”

“No, I didn’t.” She blinked at him. ‘Oh my God, I did.’

“Yes, exactly like that.”

“Fine okay, I did.” She rolled her eyes and pulled her hand from Thor’s that she might cross her arms beneath her chest. Thor wished she wouldn’t, for all that he appreciated the accentuation of her bountiful curves. The Doctor, it would seem, did too.

He cleared his throat when Thor kicked him under the table. “To pray at an altar, especially one you made, is like talking into a microphone. It’s loud. Was an offering made?”

“That’s a very vague question, Mr. Doctor,” Darcy told him, pointing with the bottle and Thor wondered if she’d just wished herself less sober through the witches spell. “To or from me?”

“Were any offerings made on the altar,” the Doctor asked more broadly.
Darcy snorted, a little giggle escaping her. “I don’t know Big Guy - you think any offers were made or accepted?”

Oh, but Thor was in trouble. Not because Darcy was well on her way to being very drunk, though that would certainly not help. But because he bed a mortal on an altar raised in his honor. He’s almost very certain his mother told him a fair few cautionary tales of such. “...yes. Offerings were made.”

*Scratch, scratch, scratch*. Thor preferred the Doctor’s note-taking, the absence of his curious gaze. “What kind? Food is traditional, the bread of life, water, that sort of thing. Money, sometimes, anything of value. Blood.”

“Something of great value,” Thor murmured, mouth pursed. “No blood.”

Darcy made a sharp, shocked little noise beside him. “Um. A little blood.”

“There was—You said you weren’t hurt.” He hadn’t seen any blood, but in truth - they’d fallen asleep, and after, rushed off in search of Tony. Thor hadn’t really stopped to look. “Darcy.”

“It was only a little.” She pouted at him, full mouth pursed and trembling and Thor thought perhaps that was unfair. “I didn’t even notice until this morning. It was nothing.”

“So. Blood offerings on a newly raised---wait,” the Doctor looked up suddenly, eyes wide. “It was meant to be a bed. What were the two of you---Oh. You were---” He turned a very accusatory eye on Thor. “Surely there are rules about this.”

“I hadn’t stopped to consider them,” Thor admitted, cagily. “It’s as you say - no one prays to the Olde Gods anymore. It isn’t something I’ve had to concern myself with, in some time.”

“Dumb human,” Darcy cut in peevishly, eyes narrowed to a heartfelt glower. “Please advise.”

“You...joined, with a God, on an alter you raised. You made an offering of yourself, and in blood and potentially other bodily fluids.”
“Okay but like - none of the gross ones! Just the normal ones, thanks! Can you not put it that way?”

Somewhere in the cosmos, his mother was very, very disappointed. Somewhere else, Loki was surely laughing and had no idea why. “Yes,” Thor confirmed, heat rising in his face. “That is the gist of it.”


“I have...a vague understanding,” he hedged, shrinking back into the seat.

“I don’t,” Darcy offered pointedly. “Please advise.”

“Darcy Lewis,” Doctor Strange said with no small measure of wonder in his voice. “Where were you on the altar? On your knees, in supplication?”

“I was,” Thor said, through gritted teeth. He wasn’t ashamed, not really, but he was embarrassed. “Begging atonement, as I said. She was...above me, in a sense.”

“Atonement for what?”

“A God does not serve to be worshiped,” he said, awkward as ever as he stared at the smooth surface of the table. “A God serves as is his duty to the universe. That no one prays to the Olde Gods anymore is no reason to fail in my duties. I begged atonement to the Lady, that I might be forgiven for not believing that she believed in me.”

“Thor...” Darcy’s voice was a soft beacon, a tether. “Is this really important? Do you really need to know this?” She asked the Doctor, the edge in her voice gone.

“And she accepted,” Doctor Strange surmised, in an equally soft voice. “And you woke up to find yourself bigger, and stronger. Do you know what it means, Thor?”
Thor had a notion that it meant a great many things. Some of which even the Doctor mightn’t have fully understood.

When he did not answer, the Doctor continued. “I cannot be sure - but I would hazard a guess that whatever it is in the cosmos that blesses the Gods - they heard your prayers and answered.”

Thor had...Thor had lowered himself to beg of mortals to forgive him his transgressions. Thor had laid with a woman upon an altar, made offerings and accepted them all the same. Thor had shed blood, and Darcy had offered it freely.

_Forgive me_, he had begged of her. The Cosmos heard, and answered his prayer.

That was all well and grand and something to marvel at later after he found an appropriate way to tell Darcy they were probably married.

Chapter End Notes

_thor's dick isn't really as big as three cans of spaghetti-ohs, but I think it would probably feel that way the next day._
Chapter 10

Probably. Thor would like it emphasized that they were probably married. A great many things could happen upon an altar, The Sacred Union be but a few of them. They could have simply summoned the favor of a higher deity. They might have fucked themselves into a good harvesting season. Or potentially, they irrevocably bound themselves for the rest of eternity and Valhalla beyond. It was a toss-up, truly.

One worth looking into, quietly and in secret.

“I won’t know without further research, but it is likely you’ve been restored as a God,” the Doctor explained, while Thor did his best to quash the internal crisis.

Darcy bared her teeth beside him, eyes narrowed. “He was always a God.”

“Yes,” the Doctor agreed, with a decidedly patronizing edge to his voice. He smiled blandly, fingers steepled on the table top. “And now he’s a very, very strong one.”

“Did he just---I’m gonna---” Thor shifted her purse from her lap to the other side of his chair, briefly holding it over her head in the motion, before she could get her hands on her taser or anything else Stark might’ve gifted her with. “Not cool, Thunderfuck. Not cool.”

“Thunderwh---No, please,” Thor shook his head, too amused by half, as he always was for her. “We’re here diplomatically Darcy, sent by a thrice-wise mutual compatriot. Let us not dishonor our friend Stark. We came for answers and the Doctor has given them freely. Best to save violence for those not so willing.”

The Doctor blinked, mouth pulling into a faint frown. He was not so expressive as Stark, for all they wore their beards small and tidy. “That’s what you call diplomacy?”

“Yes, I learned it on Earth.” He smiled benignly, as he pushed back his chair. “If that will be all, we’ll take our leave.” Thor hadn’t learned anything he mightn’t have come to the realization on his own with time, but Doctor Strange had been willingly helpful and so Thor thought it best to leave on a good note.
“Might I make a suggestion?” The Doctor did not rise but started plainly up at Thor, his expression forever curious. “A power shift such as yours that will not go unnoticed. Like calls to like.”

“And your suggestion?” Like the Doctor, Darcy had not bothered to rise, remaining in her chair like some sort of visiting monarch, shoulders back and chin raised. She was easily a foot shorter than the Doctor, even sitting, but it didn’t matter. She radiated the sort of shameless, haughty credence that quelled men in all walks of life. So like divinity, whether it be her emasculating indifference or queenly confidence. She needed only look at Doctor Strange with one expression or another, and Thor knew he would answer.

“Protection.” A book fell open before them, dead center of the table. “I’d like to offer you both some measure of protection.”

At once, Thor watched Darcy’s tight poise melt away, body spilling lax and lazy in her seat. She smiled, a molasses spread of generous lips, as she leaned into the left arm of the velveteen chair. Indifference then, Thor supposed, watching her inspect the tip of one stray curl as if his offer amused her, and nothing else. “Protection?” The shift was so skillful, a watercolor blend of expressions, that if Thor did not know the heart of Darcy so truly, he mightn’t have noticed the change at all. The Doctor had pleased her, in some way, though that much Thor could not say. “You think you can offer me better protection than him? He’s about one step away from putting me in his pocket and keeping me there forever, dude.”

Not far from the truth, Thor would never admit. But for all that he’d have liked to swaddle her up and hide her away - it wasn’t the heart of her and so he could never bring himself to try.

Doctor Strange did not know Darcy so wholly, did not understand that Darcy’s indifferent words bellied her approval in his suggestion. She was, at times, just as protective of Thor. That had always been true, nothing so new as this and them. “I don’t doubt that Thor can protect you from whatever might come, but it’s been my experience that circumventing the anything before it comes is best.”

“I hate to break it to you, Doc....But Thor’s always radiated power,” Darcy tilted her head as if this were some known quantity. In truth, Thor hadn’t known. “It’s like looking into the sun - it’s beautiful and it can hurt you and you don’t need to be close to know it. I don’t think anyone could look at him and not think....he’s something more.”

“Perhaps that’s true,” the Doctor conceded, eyes narrowed. “But whatever he was, he’s something else entirely now. I would offer you a cloaking of sorts. Something to shield his whereabouts, from all things.”
Such magics Thor had heard of, though never used to any particularly righteous ends. “Heimdall?”

“Even he,” the Doctor acknowledged and Thor wondered who this man was, with books and magic and knowledge. “A temporary solution, of course.”

Thor leaned against Darcy’s chair and stared at nothing in particular at all. The faded damask print on the walls, worn in places, torn in others. The dark shadows along the edges of the wall, deeper in the corners like tiny black holes. The spit of fire flickering in the gaslamp. Hiding. An easy solution, in truth. To hide even from the All-Seeing Eye. To hide from Asgard and it’s choices, it’s demands. To hide from Loki. From the Throne and the Council and the nine realms and the Weavers and the thread. He would be free to carry on as he was wont to do, a hero of Earth, and nothing more. “No,” he said at a last, watching the light from the gas lamps shine on the curls of Darcy’s hair. “To do so is to abandon my kingdom. I cannot.”

“For Ms. Lewis, then.”

“Again,” Darcy drawled, still in her careless sprawl. Thor touched her shoulder, willed himself to absorb that easy confidence. “What do you think you can give me, that he can’t?”

She was goading him. The pair of them perhaps, but Thor could not speak to the fires in Doctor Strange, only the fires within himself and Darcy stoked them with a deft, knowing hand. Deft, little hands that touched the darker, more frightening things within Thor, the things he’d thought never to free. What could he give her that Thor could not? Let them never find out. “Is Darcy in danger?” He his thumb brush down the tender line of her throat, felt the beat of her heart match his own, as soothing as any milk song lullaby.

Darcy touched his hand, rested her own atop his fingers. “I’m always a little bit in danger, Big Guy. I run with the Avengers.”

“Ms. Lewis has been altered,” the Doctor said, little room for nonsense in his tone. “From this, or something else; I can’t say. She is human. She is mortal. She’s dripping in every magic that’s ever touched her, more than is usual, but that isn’t unusual given who she knows. I see yours, I see mine. Your brothers, faintly. Others, even. Not unusual - magic is...sticky. It leaves a mark. But with Ms. Lewis, there is no simple mark. It’s all over her.”

Unconsciously, his hand clenched, curled where it was over Darcy’s delicate chin. She didn’t move, simply exhaled against the pressure, like Thor couldn’t crush her, hurt her. “And this is concerning?” He managed to say, forcing the words out as he steadied his hand on her shoulder once more.
If the Doctor noticed Thor’s hand or Darcy’s indifference, he made no mention. “How long has it been since your Gods were worshiped at their peak? You were there for an end of it, and you were scarcely out of childhood. A thousand years?”

“A thousand years to a child of the Aesir, and a thousand years by Midgardian standard are not so equally exchanged. I am a thousand years old by one measure and timeless by another. You may decide to which as you please.” Still - Thor couldn’t argue. Faith was running dry when he’d come into his name, a God in his own right. Believers were not what they were when Odin pulled the Realms together and raised Asgard to the kingdom she was now. “It has been some time.”

“And yesterday, you prayed and were answered. Just like that. After a thousand years of silence.” The Doctor steepled his fingers and stared up at Thor. “The desire within you to be more, to be restored has always been there. Fate, or the Cosmos or whatever answers a Gods prayer, they have always known it. But yesterday, they chose to answer and it is not a coincidence. Given what I know, and my knowledge is considerable, added to what I see before my eyes and do not yet understand- Ms. Lewis was the conduit to the power shift. Whether she be the megaphone you prayed into, or simply the battery to power your prayers - the power that came to you, came through her. All magic leaves a mark - something like that? It can be seen from space.”

“No different than Thor,” Darcy argued - forever argued. She would serve Midgard well in the Council of Nine, who was wont to argue on all things, for eternity. “Why does it matter that they can see me if they can already see him?”

“Because he’s a God, and you’re still a mortal, Ms. Lewis. Power is part and parcel for Thor’s kin. It’s expected. A power shift isn’t unusual, although one of that magnitude...I’ve yet to find any histories on it. It’s curious, and no one likes a mystery. You most likely would not enjoy other Gods inquiring as to whether or not you can offer them the same.”

Darcy blanched, turning into the curve of Thor’s hand. “Uh. Ew. No.”

“This protection,” Thor cut in, feeling his skin grow tight and hot at the thought of anyone sniffing after Darcy. His hand clenched again, over her shoulder, and Darcy pushed into the rough touch, tilting her head to rest against his forearm. A jealous God, he had promised her, and he thought he might deliver. “What do you propose?”

“For anyone else, a cloaking sigil would suffice. Something inked into the skin.” He flicked through the book, glittering dust motes bursting forth in the flickering lamplight. Thor recognized some of the magic, but he’d never had a head for sorcery and most meant nothing at all to him. Loki would
know. “But for her...ink is not enough. Something different.”

Darcy leaned forward, slinking out of Thor’s soft touch. He did not like it, the absence of contact, and found himself reaching forward to curl his fingers into the fall of her hair. She let him, never so much as twitching when he tangled them together, tethering her, soft brown curls a leash to bind them. At what end of the leash Thor found himself, he could not say in that moment. “Why different?”

Magic had a taste, Thor realized, as he found himself in another room, this one darker, and more airless than the last. Round, with wooden floors instead of carpets, not a single window to be found on the curving walls, a single chair and a fireplace it’s only markings of habitability. Loki had a room like this - where he came to dwell and think and practice patience (not lose himself in the magic, not lose what morals he held onto with tricky, skinny fingers). An inner sanctum. He understood the connotations of being welcomed into such a place, even if they made no sense to him - this was a room of utmost importance to Doctor Strange, and he had brought them there. They were standing now, and the shift put Darcy a scant too far from him, hair pulling in his grip. He moved forward, but did not release her and felt himself grow hot in a different way when she pulled in his grip once, twice, before leaning into his touch. Minx. Thor tugged her back, flush against him before letting his hand fall from her locks. Her cheeks were a fierce, rosy red. Thor scowled at the Doctor. “I believe I asked you to stop that.”

“Humans don’t filter magic,” the Doctor said, instead of issuing any sort of apology or explanation for his continued deviance. “Magic filters humans. But then, there’s you Ms. Lewis. Magic is invasive - your body should rebel against its touch, reject it. It should feel uncomfortable at least, hurt at most. But you...enjoy it. Your body embraces it like a tangible touch. You take it into yourself and breathe it right back out. And every time you do - it alters you a little more. You’re an anomaly, Ms. Lewis. And I cannot say if the potential was always within you, or if Thor’s particularly divine intervention changed the course you were intended for, but the essence of the matter is that you are different. You are different from normal humans, and you are different than you were before. A traditional inked sigil - a magical mark - is meaningless alone on something already saturated in magic. A drop in the ocean, as it were.”

“Oh.” Darcy blinked at him, leaning back subtly into Thor. “Well then. So. Tattoos are out. What did you have in mind?”

“I’ll need time to consider the specificity of the case.” Doctor Strange waved a long, pale hand, and a door opened to the left of them. Thor felt Darcy tremble beneath his hand. “Until I know, I would welcome you to stay. My home is very well hidden.”

“It’s like...noon or something. I have a job. Like a real job, and things to do. We’re in the middle of the Ambassador Education seminars. I have---”
“Tony values your safety and would grant you the necessary amnesty for missing a day’s work,” Thor cautioned her, gently. “I would welcome the witches’ protections if it means keeping you safe. A lost day is nothing compared to a lost life.”

“Doctor,” Doctor Strange cut in, tightly. “I’m a Doctor, and a Master of the Mystic—”

“Look, if we gotta kick it here and stew on the new Big and Scary, we’re going to need more booze,” Darcy explained, holding her hand out expectantly. “And I need to get a message to Tony, or he’ll have kittens and by that I mean he’ll send literal robots to your door, himself included. Actually, do you have—-” The bottle manifested in Darcy’s palm once more, her whole body turning hot against Thor, lax and tense all at once. Doctor Strange looked somewhat pleased by the breathless hiss in her voice as she finished her sentence. “Wifi?”

“I do.” The Doctor gave Thor a pointed look as he spoke. “The password is…”

***

Through the door, Thor found himself looking out a window to the ground floor, though he’d been certain they’d been in the uppermost levels of the townhouse. Outside, cars bustled by, people chattering in quiet, inaudible tones amongst themselves. Thor watched them for a long time, while Darcy did things on her phone. Work things, from the sound of her furious texting. “Wanna call Tony?”

“If only to prevent the inevitable robot kittens,” Thor teased, moving to unfold himself from the chair he’d taken up in near the window.

“No, stay.” Darcy came to him, curling herself down into his lap. Thor steadied her, as she settled herself sideways, with both legs thrown over the arm of the chair. Thor reveled in the light weight. Though they’d always been particularly tactile, Darcy had never been so bold as to sit herself upon him, save for the once... He liked it, the shape of her small against him, the press of her soft thighs spread over his own, the curve of her body held tight in the cage of his arms. All things he’d never considered to enjoy when he considered Darcy having him at all.

“Jarvis.” Darcy called, once she’d ceased her squirming and made herself comfortable. “Gimme Tony.”
“Darling, sunshine, light of my life,” Tony sang, the image coming forth on Darcy’s phone. “And
Darcy. What did Mr. Mystic have to say on Thor eating the green mushroom? Was it really vague
and mostly condescending?”

“I ate no mushrooms,” Thor frowned, tired by the day and Stark’s pros. Captain Rogers had given
him a little leather bound book to write such nonsense in for later research and it was filled almost
entirely with Darcy and Tony’s particular nonsense alone.

“It’s from a game, don’t worry about it. He said...that it’s legit. Kind of a big deal. Thor’s not just
bigger - he’s stronger.”

“That’s...probably not a good thing, is it? Why can’t that just be a good thing? Why is everything
bad?” Tony frowned. “Nothing for free, and all that. What’s the downside?”

Darcy sank back against Thor and held the phone a little higher to capture both their faces in the
return image. “We don’t know the price, and the power-up isn’t going to go ignored. Doctor Strange
said this kind of power shift...will be noticed. Could draw attention from the wrong sort.”

“And the good Doc had a solution? Some kind of cryptic bologna?” Stark leaned back in his chair, a
screwdriver caught between two fingers. “Magical band-aid?”

“There isn’t one,” Darcy said bluntly, and Thor wondered if it was a lie or a half-truth. Doctor
Strange had offered the solution, and Thor had refused it on grounds of nobility. “We can’t exactly
hide him, right? He isn’t the problem. It’s uh...Well. Me.”

“You.” Stark pushed forward in his chair, back straight, mouth pulled into a frown. “What do you
mean you? What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing’s wrong with me. I’m fine. I just. You know. Running with Superheros leaves its mark
Tony. I’ve always been in a certain measure of danger. This isn’t different.”

“Except that the things you’re in danger from are usually human and myself or others can punch
them in their human face.” Thor watches the change in Stark’s face, melting from cocky bravado to
something decidedly more paternal. From Stark to Tony. “Sell it to me straight, kiddo. What are we
talking about here?”
“Magic leaves a mark,” Darcy quoted the Doctor. “Strange thinks that I might have played...a somewhat key role in Thor’s power up. And if he can make that connection, so can others.”

“That’s...not good.” Tony’s brow scrunched. “But what’s that got to do with Strange calling and demanding I send Thor’s cloak over?”

***

Thor left Darcy and Tony to speculate on why Doctor Strange would need his cloak, choosing instead to pace the small, well-appointed parlor. Glass cases and cabinets lined the walls, all in various shapes and sizes and even colors, their contents just as wild and varied. Bones and gems and sharp little daggers. Small wooden boxes with intricate, multi-layered locks. Inky black feathers, that shimmered as he passed them. Watches that ticked, but whose arms didn’t move. He could hear the quiet call of the magic - a lifeforce in its own- within every single object. They all seemed to pulse, like a living, beating heart, bleeding magic into the air, sticky and sweet. That bastard.

“You’re restless,” Darcy said, to no point, as she tucked her phone back into her purse and looked at him fully. “What do you need?”

“He put you in this room on purpose,” Thor very nearly snarled. He was restless, static crackling at his fingertips. He didn’t like to hide, didn’t want to be put away in a room while others solved his problems. He didn’t like the Doctor, for all that he was mostly circumspect and helpful. He wasn’t upset with Darcy and the nature of her...altered state. The gifts of her body, both metaphysical and physical were just that - gifts. To be bestowed as she saw put, but hopefully only to Thor. He would not see them monopolized in such a...a.. sordid manner. Doctor Strange was playing with her. Teasing. Flirting.

So openly, so brazenly, Thor could not take the action as anything but insult.

“...I mean I think we’re both here on purpose?” Darcy pushed up from the chair - and even that, Thor thought, stank with some sort of magic. “Like, aren’t we waiting?”

“No. He chose this room specifically. For you.” Thor ceased his stalking to turn to her, to take in the slight heave of her chest with every breath, the bright pink color high on her cheeks, the bitten swell of her bottom lip. Her nipples were hard beneath her dress. Thor wondered if she was wet between her lush thighs, and would bet his own crown she was. He moved forward, casting her in his shadow. Skies above, but she was lovely, even in his anger he could never be blind to it. “It’s a magical reliquary; like a library for magical artifacts. Can you feel it?”
She bit her lip again, pulled it between her teeth with a frown. “You know I can’t.”

Did he know that? Perhaps he did. “You can feel me, though. You said so.”

“You’re different.” She crossed her arms over her stomach, the nervous flutter in the gesture making his skin hot. She looked smaller like that, skittish like a little hare. Prey. Thor liked it more than he should.

He moved forward again, one stride carrying him close enough to feel the heat on her skin. He towered, but she did not sway. “Am I?” He asked, looking down at her.

Thor moved his hands to her hips, clutching at the fabric and not the give of her perfect curves. Darcy raised her chin to meet his eye. “You know you are.”

“Do you give yourself to me freely, Darcy?” He could feel it more keenly, all the new storms inside him, rising and swelling beneath his new skin. “Or are you drunk on my magic too?”

Oh but it hurt to think - beautiful, perfect Darcy who took magic in and breathed it out. That she might have only come to want him for he was a God and she was different. It hurt, but Thor was selfish and didn’t know how to make it matter.

Darcy sucked in a sharp, shocked little breath, mouth falling open with a tremble. “Thor---how could you even---”

“I could I not?” He drew her close, lifted her right up off her feet, and pressed her into the wall, pinned her there, a fluttering little butterfly. “How could I not worry that you’ve come to me with anything but an open heart and mind. Have I bewitched you, little girl? Right into my bed.” Just as Doctor Strange would do, if given half the chance.

“No,” Darcy promised. It was a promise, Thor could see it in her sea storm eyes. A promise she couldn’t make, but Thor would take to heart all the same. “It doesn’t matter anyway, does it? Even if you did. Does it matter?”

“It should.” By the stars, but it should. “But no, it doesn’t. I think you’re mine now, did you know
that?” Sworn on altars of her own hand, she was his. Static crackled again in his palms, biting at the soft, exposed skin on the back of her thighs where he held her. He watched the breath escape her, lashes fluttering. If magic left a mark, Thor would tattoo his name upon her whole body. “I would have you.”

“Right now?” It was scarcely said at all, breathless and quiet as she looked up at him. “Really? He’s probably got some kind of surveillance on us.”

“He’s absolutely watching.” Perhaps not actively, but there would be a spell in place to spy. No witch wouldn’t. Thor suspected the low, oval mirror he had her pressed right into. “Will you make me wait?” He did not want to wait. Didn’t want Doctor Strangers magic to linger on herself, to stay and soak and stain. He needed to erase it, lick it right off her skin.

“Inpatient and jealous,” Darcy teased, color high on her cheeks. “Thor, you know I don’t want him right? Even if the magical mojo does kinda get me going. I don’t even know him.” She touched his face, and he turned to bite gently at her palm. “You know that.”

“I know you’re mine.” Thor knew she was his like he knew Mjolnir was his. It was the way she fit in his hand. Like her body was made with his palms in mind. Thor knew. “Just like I know you’re wet for him.”

“Not him!” Her protests were pretty, an angry flash of lightning in her eyes. “Yes, okay. The magic stuff---kind of does it for me.”

“His magic.” She gasped when Thor shoved her dress up roughly, only good manners and strange houses keeping him from tearing it right off. Without word by him, she scrambled to hold it up and Thor liked the easy compliance more than was perhaps right or moral. “I hate it, Princess. I can’t abide by it. It makes me rage.”

“I---I can’t help what my body does,” she managed to say, body curling up, bowing to meet the roll of his hips. “Thor.”

“You can’t.” Thor hushed her with a rough, biting kiss. “But I can’t stand the idea of his mark on you.” Or Loki’s, or whatever magic had touched Darcy. “And so I must replace it with my own. Do you understand?” He hoped that she did. Thor scarcely understood it himself, this righteous, filthy desperation to stain her with himself, leave no room for speculation. Bedding her right then and there, while the good witch watched --- would be a good start.
“No,” Darcy admitted, leaning forward just enough to pull her dress up over her head. “But I’m going to let you fuck me anyway.”

“Good enough.” He kissed her. Crushed her harder against the mirror, only the weight of his body holding her in place as he buried his hands in her hair and pulled her face to his, biting at her mouth.

She pulled away on a gasp, mouth a brilliant berry red. “Let me---I want to---” She pushed at his chest, insistent little hands doing nothing to move him. “I want---”

“What do you want? He asked, capturing her hands and dwarfing them in his own.

“I wanna show you.” She smirked, mouth pulled wide. “Let me show you.”

And so he did, setting her to her feet only to have her slink to her knees and --- Thor wanted that too. Ahh, but the sight of her, knelt so pretty at his feet. He was too tall - or she was far too small - for her to reach him comfortably. Holding her upturned gaze, Thor moved back, one step, two steps, three - until he bumped into the chair, and sat back, watching her where she knelt on the floor - waiting.

“Come here.” He did not speak loudly, did not gesture with his hands. He offered no other instruction, save for the connotations of his spread thighs, the evidence of his hard cock straining against his borrowed trousers.

She crawled to him.

*Oh*. Thor swallowed hard, the heat of his rage cooling at the humbling sight of her beautiful body on all fours. Beneath him in form, but above him in all things. Never in all his life, not a single woman he’d taken to tumble - never had he let himself have this.

It had always seemed wrong. The dirty, sordid thing Loki would crave with his typical deviancy. Thor was meant to be noble and giving and kind. Gracious. Humbled. Understanding. His throne should not be so raised, his altar not so mighty. Confident, yes, but never cocky. He wasn’t supposed to *want* this.
In truth, Thor had never felt so humbled, than with this strange, peculiar, lovely little mortal kissing his boots.

“Princess,” he found himself rumbling, reaching to tangle his fingers - gently this time- in her hair, as she reached him. “You are---you are **perfect**.” Pulling against his grip, harder even when she refused, Darcy leaned back just far enough to unhook the demon contraption she called a bra, and drop it to the floor. The free weight of her breasts...Thor found it preferable. “Perfect,” he said again, as she shuffled forward more, forcing herself between his legs and he undid the buttons of his trousers.

He could barely stand the sight of her hands on his cock, fingers failing to meet around his girth. She didn’t use her mouth like he thought she might - like he craved. Her touch was soft, delicate and teasing and Thor wasn’t sure what might fall from his mouth should he open it, demands or begging and so he didn’t, biting his tongue until he couldn’t hold back.

“**Fuck,**” he cried, the Midgardian curse a delight on the tongue as she moved his cock between the cleft of her breast. Thor had done this a few times before but never with anyone so well endowed, or so cherished. “Your body is---”

“**Yours,**” Darcy told him, before he could spill marvels to her beauty - her body was **ridiculous**, bounty and beauty and pale moonlight skin. And his by her own mouth.

He had thought for sure he’d never see anything more beautiful than Darcy above him, but he’d not yet seen her on her knees, between his legs, the mess of her curls spilling over his splayed thighs. “If that’s true,” he said tightly, knowing it to be true, trusting her word as perfect honesty. He pulled her hair, hard enough to make her cry out. With his other hand, he touched her lips, desire dropping hot in his stomach when she licked his fingertips. “Then I would have this mouth - **my** mouth - now.”

He was too much for her, but she made a valiant warriors effort, choking when he hit the back of her throat, inches left still wrapped in the twist of her clever palm. Every little helpless, muffled cry of her mouth tightened his bollocks until he was certain he’d lose himself to the spellcast of her tongue.

And he did, with no warning for her, and he held her in place to take it all though she did nothing so much as squirm to keep him between her lips.

When he pulled her to her feet, he was not gentle. He hauled her up, a hand in her hair and another pulling at her shaking hand until she stood on trembling legs and tumbled against his chest. She moaned into the quiet of the room when he yanked her head back and pressed a biting kiss into her
jaw. She pushed into the sharp press of his teeth, and against the pull of her hair. *Stars*. Every star in the sky - but she was perfection. It thrilled him, made his blood sing like he was preparing for battle and not bedding the finest creature in all nine realms. Something wicked and delicious curled up inside him, quelled so surely before Darcy freed it.

“I could leave you like this,” he told her, very quietly that she was forced to hold her breath and listen. “All wet and wanting. I could make you dress and send you home like this until I saw fit to...cure you.”

The protest was clear in her eyes, white lightning over a storming sea, but her pretty, precocious mouth stayed still. Thor held her harder for her compliance, let his free hand bite into the giving curve of her hip hard enough to *bruise*. That was the reward - the mark he would leave. “After all, should I really be expected to clean a mess another man made?”

The Cosmos might burst pink and blue and starlight, but Thor would never see anything so frighteningly perfect as fat, crystalline tears catching on Darcy’s eyelashes. “No,” she trembled, mouth pulled into a pout and he very nearly lost it right then and there, very nearly crumbled and begged on his own bended knee for she to forgive him but...

He was hard again, and she was so very warm against him, her little hands curled into the front of his shirt, clutching. She turned her head and kissed his wrist and his fingers released her hair without any warning.

“But it’s not really for him, is it?”

“No,” she promised, tears falling down her pale cheeks. “No other Gods before you.”

And well. Could Thor really be blamed for taking her then? Just like that, all teary-eyed and faithful? Could he be blamed for hauling her right into his lap, chair groaning it’s protest as it shook? For kissing her disheveled curls and telling her how good she was, even as he fucked into her with two fingers, panties pushed aside?

“And the faithful will be rewarded,” he promised her, kissing the corner of her open mouth. Across from the chair, the oval mirror glinted, and Thor smiled into Darcy’s tear-stained cheek. “In fact, I think you can take another.” And as he was not *asking* her if she could, he did not wait for her agreement, just pushed a third thick finger inside her. In truth - he knew she could take it and more. “Like before.” He held his fingers still between her thighs and looked down at her flushed face. “Come on Princess. Don’t you know what I want?” Clever Darcy; she *did*. She fucked back, bracing her hands on his shoulders, eyelashes fluttering. She was wet, and Thor knew even if it
hadn’t been, it was for him now. “Faster now, I would see you spend at least once before I have you. I’m nothing if not a gracious God.”

“Thor,” Darcy cried, fingers tangling in his hair where she held him. In truth, he liked the little bite of pain. Something shared between them. “God.”

“Yes.” When she said it, she believed it. He was her God. This was how they worshipped. “Come on, Princess. Give me what I want.”

“I need---I need---” She was gasping, little body working over him, thighs shaking where they braced against his own. She was so small, even like this, in lap, he still was forced to look down to meet her eye. Truly he had grown - but it wasn’t until this moment that he felt the full shape of it. He felt big, below her. He’d feel bigger inside of her.

“What do you need?” He bit her cheek, a gentle sting. “Pray for it, little girl.”

It wasn’t...it wasn’t words, nothing but sweet moans spilled from her mouth, but Thor heard it all the same. The way you hear your conscious, silent screaming all the same. Thor knew what she wanted, knew what she prayed for - and gave it to her.

He hurt her. Just a little. Took her by the hair once more and pulled sharply, exposing her pale, unmarked neck. He bit her there, just over her collarbone. Bit her again, where her shoulder met her throat. Kissed her mouth, and bit her lip. Felt her body shake and give and spend wetly over his fingers while she cried out for him, “God, god, god.”

And even as she laid limp and sated in his arms, Thor was not done. He lifted up her ragdoll body, slid her over his cock, pushed inside her and reveled in her weak, breathless gasp. “I’ll have you like this,” he told her, pressed the words into her hair, her soft warm breath spilling over his neck where she laid against him. She moved to meet his thrust, and he stilled her. “No Princess, take it.” She would hate that and love it all the same. “Let yourself have it.”

“Thor---”

He spanked her. Hard enough to leave his palm stinging and the clench of her cunt was almost enough to ruin him. She forced herself limp, moving only to tangle her fingers into his hair.
“Here like this, you’ll call me God, and you’ll take it,” he bit out, swatting her ass again. He could see the bright pink park in the mirror, perfectly hand shaped and in stark contrast to the pale skin of her ass. “You’ll call me God, Princess. Or you’ll keep your mouth shut.”

“God, yes! Oh my God.”

Thor laughed, the helpless spirling sort of laugh that escapes you without permission. “You love this,” he told her, or asked her, he couldn’t be sure. He slid his hands up under her lush thighs and lifted her up to the tip of his cock, slammed her down hard enough to jar them both and she cried out so sweetly, so prettily. “You love this, don’t you? You need it.” When she did not answer, he spanked her again. “Princess.”

“Yes, please. Please.”

“Look at us.” He nudged her face with his own until she was looking over her shoulder at the mirror. “Look how you take me. Your so small, but you make space for me.” In the reflection, Thor watched with vain appreciation, the way his cock moved inside of her, the way she took him, pink little cunt stretched tight around him. He could see the bruises forming already, little fingerprint points of red and purple where he gripped her thighs and gripped her harder for them. She cried out, burying her face back into his throat, cunt clenching even as he pulled nearly out of her to fuck up into her again, harder and harder.

“Touch yourself like last time,” he spat, closing his eyes to the mirror—in truth, it was too good. To see the way their bodies joined. Too much. “I’ll see that instead.”

She obeyed, pulling her hand from the tangle of his hair, to work between her thighs in tight little circles. He felt the change in her body, the sharpness of her breath. “You before I, Princess. All things equal.” Two for two.

“Kiss me?”

And he did, losing himself in it, in the rebellious roll of her hips as she took what he gave her, and what she needed. This time when she came, it rose slowly like a storm, bursting in a torrent that swept up his pleasure too. He came, buried deep inside her, the tight clench of her cunt stealing his breath. He cried out into the mess of her wayward curls even as she rode the last aftershocks of her own pleasure, ringing him dry, a shaking, quaking mess beneath her.

***
Afterward, he helped her into her dress with his own two trembling hands. He braided her hair, down her back in the wide, triple folded warrior style of Asgard, toying gently with the little wayward curls that escaped the confines. “Are you...was that...” How odd that he should lose his words now when in the moment he could barely hold his tongue. “I made you cry.”

“And you liked it,” she added, with her own little smile. Her eyes were clear now, no mote of distress. “Sometimes it’s good, you know? Cleansing. Cathartic, maybe.”

“I’ve never seen you cry before.” Perhaps it was the rarity that stoked his fires. He’d never seen Darcy look so vulnerable.

She leaned up, demanding a kiss with the uptilt of her mouth and not a single word. Thor obeyed. “Yeah well, not very many people have,” she told him, reaching up to fix his hair in turn. “I don’t make a habit of it.”

“I’ll cherish the honor.” He caught her hand and kissed her palm. “Are you in pain?”

“Only in the good ways.” She winked at him. “I told you I like it like that. Maybe a little more than I thought - but I think that’s you.”

*Like that.* Roughly, she meant. Thor knew that she did. But he knew too, that what happened between them went beyond pleasures edge of pain.

They might be married, he thought again, wildly. His heart hammered in his chest - forever the fool, he. And yet - he could not bring himself to quite regret it. At least - not until he was certain.
They kissed. They kissed for a great while, curled into one another in the Doctor’s magical chair, before a low burning fireplace. They kissed deeply and at length and leading up to nothing more than the next kiss, and the next. It felt strangely...youthful, the intimate indulgence. Thor has never had such with a woman before - easy intimacy not dictated by sex or time. Hurried tumbles, yes. Life-affirming post-near-death, yes. One-offs in the night and gone by morning, yes. There was Jane - but kissing hadn’t been a priority, long before the sex had lost its appeal for her. He liked it. Darcy’s mouth was warm and plush against his own, and her hands were buried in his hair. Her thighs straddle his own and he touched her as he pleased, large palms gliding over every curve and expense of her body. She really was a Midgardian marvel of delicate, compact strength. Darcy was small the way galaxies were small in face of the cosmos. Small, yes, but full of endless wonder. When her kisses grew honey-slow, he tucked her beneath his chin and marveled instead at the way they could be still together too, two bodies sharing space. He’d never known such a thing before.

She was sleeping when Doctor Strange returned, hand tucked up into the hem of Thor’s shirt, the other curled between their bodies. Thor lifted her easily, settling her back down into the chair where she curled into the warmth left behind by their bodies. It wasn’t quite evening yet, sun hanging half in the sky behind sticky white clouds, but it was on its way - they’d lost a day here, truly.

“You called for my cloak.” Thor’s cloak had nothing to do with his status as a God, and everything to do with his place as Prince, heir to the Throne of Asgard. A gift from his parents, on the day of his heir-crowning. Still - it was brimming with passing magic and blessings alike. His mother - sweet Friga in Valhalla Beyond - had woven a number of spells into it herself, grown with a mothers love and fierce protectiveness. He was fond of it. “I’ll not have it meddled with, witch.”

“What’s done is done.” Strange snapped his fingers and the vibrant red cloak appears on the coat rack beside the door. “I cut a piece from the inside, smaller than a thumbnail, and healed the tear. I needed it for this cloak.”

A second cloak appeared - held aloft in Strange’s hand like a matador and not hanging from the coat rack. This one was the color of a starless sky at midnight, not black, not blue, not purple, but something like all of them depending on where the light touched. Thor could feel the familiar pull of his mother’s magic on it, woven in and out of something impossibly older, magic from when Time was not yet a quantile measure, before Thor, before Odin even.

And the witch-doctor had given it to Darcy.
“What is this thing?” He reached out to touch the black hole fabric, so richly saturated in darkness it was as if looking into a void. It slipped like water on his fingers, more like shadows than any tangible thing. Such craftsmanship seemed rare on Midgard, and Thor could not bring himself to snub the beauty in it. It truly was a well-tailored thing.

“I said I’d create a cloak of sorts,” the Doctor replied, letting the inky fabric tip into Thor’s hands. “I’d intended for something less physical but for Ms. Lewis - I think cloak in the literal sense will work best.”

Thor held it up, letting it unfold to the floor in a ripple. “You did not make this from my cloak alone. There is Olde Magicks in this - older even, than my people. Older than yours by a great deal more.”

The Doctor startled a little, eyes shifting to Thor and away. “I wove your cloak into one of my own. My first cloak - given to me by...a friend. It contains a number of protection and shielding spells - not of my creation. Old, like you said. I grew out of it years ago - such protections I can provide for myself now. I use the Cloak of Levitation instead. This one ... was ready for a new mantle. It was Time.”

Thor would like very much to be angry. Would like to cast the cloak aside as another one of the Doctor’s flirtatious advances. But in truth - there was very little of the man’s magic in it. Only along the edges, where he must have woven Thor’s cloak into his own, strand by strand. But it was a smudge compared to the Olde Magicks, indeed even Frigga’s own seemed like childish scrawl in comparison. “At what cost does a gift like this come? I’ll not have Darcy owe you favors.”

“I looked,” the Doctor spoke tightly, hand fluttering over a medallion hanging against his chest. “I looked in every book I could think on the subject of cloaking Ms. Lewis, and there was nothing. So I looked into the future - something I am rarely inclined to do. And I saw her wearing this cloak.”

To see past what is, to what might or will be - was a great magic. Not something took lightly, or for free. Thor frowned. “And the cost?”

“Nothing.” The Doctor took a small step back, head tipped in a little bow. “In this - I believe I’m paying my own cost.”

“And to what do you pay for?” Thor’s gaze slid to Darcy, and then to the glinting, polished silver mirror adjacent the chair, ripe with the Seeing Eye spell Thor could suss out since a small child, as it had been one of Loki’s early favorites. “Ah. And did you enjoy what you saw?”
“You knew I could see - anything I paid witness too was your doing.”

“I was hardly there to hold your gaze and make you watch.”

“No,” Strange sneered, eyes alight. “That was her doing. You think you’re doing her a favor, wiping out any magical signature that isn’t your own? You’re just painting a bigger target on her back. When one dog pisses on a tree, it just makes all the other dogs want to piss on it more.”

“Well, I would caution you against trying,” Thor warned, shifting his body to shield Strange’s gaze from Darcy. “Or perhaps I find out the extent of my new strength.”

“She is wasted on you.” Strange rolled his eyes, but Thor could see the tension in the man's shoulders. “An anomaly such as her doesn’t deserve to kiss boots and be used as a whipping post for ham-fisted princes with inferiority complexes. She should be treasured.”

“I am a God, Doctor.” Thor smiled lightly and narrowed her eyes. “Would you keep her in one of these tidy glass boxes with your other treasures?” Thor laughed outright. “Better myself than you, if that be the case. You see an anomaly - something to be solved. But I know the heart of her. That which yields is not always weak, Stephen Strange.” Thor felt a wicked grin spread across his face. “Does it upset you that she likes it? Perhaps her penchant for magic is born from the same spark. Darcy likes a sharper pleasure.”

The Doctor scowled. “Perhaps.”

“I am due to return to Asgard in six months time.” He’d been blessed with that much; he doubted even Loki’s patience would span further. “The Council will not quell talk of any power shift. Word will spread quickly of my restoration.”

“Better Asgard than Midgard.” The Doctor was unapologetic in his summation as he waved Thor off. “Tear up your own planet with your petty power squabbling. But mind the messes you make along the way.”

“You don’t like Gods on your Earth.”

Strange shrugged his shoulders, his own red cape rippling around his ankles. “There have always been Gods on Earth, and so there shall always be. Not just your kind, Thor Odinson. What I don’t
“Careless----” Thor felt static hiss and crackle along his skin but he would not stoop so low as to prove the Doctor right. “Perhaps once - but I am learning.”

“And does your learning extend so far as to let your homicidal brother not only live but rule your kingdom while you play Hero and Helper on another planet entirely?”

“Do not speak of Loki,” Thor bared his teeth. “Did you Look and See that too, Doctor Strange? Whatever you think you know of my brother - you are wrong. He was poisoned, taken in the mind by something dark, something wicked. He is clean of it now.”

“No one is ever truly clean of magic,” the Doctor warned him. “As I have said - it changes you.”

And such was true - Thor knew. Loki would never quite be the same, but Thor thought perhaps that was for the better. Loki had grown and learned, just as Thor had. They had both been changed. Thor knew it to be true - Loki served the kingdom to it’s best interest without audience, without someone to prove something too. It was, for Loki, the ultimate act of selflessness. Doctor Strange was a peculiar man - not someone who Thor thought could be entirely labeled human. Magic left a mark, it changed you.

Darcy.

“And her?” He looked at her, sweet Darcy with her disheveled curls, curled in the chair. “Will it change her as it has changed you?”

“Not that I have Seen. I doubt she’ll ever be able to practice with any kind of intent. Magic likes order and parallels and patterns. Ms. Lewis is...the antithesis of that. She is chaos. She is unpredictable. Her faith in you is unreasonable, given her vague Catholic upbringing and new millennial approach to religion. Her response to passing magic is unorthodox; it should not feel good, in any capacity. The only magic that ever feels good is the kind you don’t want to mess with. The kind that got your brother. Her ability to affect magical forces is beyond curious; it’s downright concerning. I don’t think her part in your power up was particularly intentional or even expected by whatever lay beyond the cosmos. I think it was chaos at its core. What are the chances you met this girl when you came to Earth? This one girl who just so happens to have an actual, indelible effect on magic. Endlessly different universes, and endlessly different realities and this is the one you fell into. What are the chances?”
“So nothing so simple as Fate?”

“What is Fate? I don’t speak to it. There is an order to things. There are paths we will walk, no matter what. Perhaps that’s fate. I’m saying that Ms. Lewis is an unprecedented wild card.”

“But you saw her. You Looked.” Thor had heard of people who lived outside of Fate. Whose fortunes were not so writ in stars. They were oft wild, savage things who gnashed their teeth at any foreseen restraint, physical or metaphorical alike. They could not be ruled or governed. They died young. Darcy wasn’t like that. “A Seer from my mother’s planet saw her in the Dream World.” Laying a flower crown atop Thor’s head, as he knelt before her. “She might be removed from the Paths, but Fate touches all.”

“A God’s Path is different. She’s a mortal, regardless of her peculiarities. I saw many paths when I looked to her future - and the cloak was one of them. As to your Seers? What they saw was to your benefit, not Ms. Lewis. She is in your life now, and so your Path will pull at her. However, if you don’t believe in the Paths, the Paths don’t matter. I don’t think your Fate cares about Midgard, Thor. It lost faith when we lost faith.” Again, Doctor Strange shrugged, and his cape curled up, licking at his open palm like a particularly precocious fire flame.

“Darcy has that in spades though.”

“As I said - I don’t speak to Fate. I can only speculate. Maybe I’m right. Maybe you’re right.” He paused, brow furrowing. “Or perhaps we both are. Perhaps it isn’t that she’s removed from the Paths, but that she’s only just been given one.”

A terrifying thought. Better she be without a Path than be given one Thor didn’t know.

***

Strange saw them to the door when Stark’s car pulled to the curb. Darcy was half-asleep beside him, sloe-eyed and quiet. “You won’t need to wear it all the time. I suspect given your peculiar nature, you’ll retain the essence of the cloak. Thor will be able to tell if it’s wearing thin. Should you go to Asgard...wear it always.”

Darcy held the cloak awkwardly in her arms. “Is it...weird? Like yours. You know. Vaguely sentient.” Even as she spoke, Strange’s cloak was making its serpentine way up her calf.

“...yes,” Strange admitted, tugging his cloak away from her like a petulant child. “Although how
Thor’s particular cape will affect that, I can’t say. Such things...grow fond, after time. The more you wear it, the more it will tailor itself to you.”

“Welp...” Darcy shifted the silky cloak to one arm, holding out her other hand to Strange. He took it, shaking far too gently, and longer than was possibly necessary. “Thanks for the duds, dudes. And the advice. I owe you one.”

“Not a thing - consider it a gift.” He had her hand cupped in both of them and Thor considered smacking him sharply over the back of his knuckles like the palace cook would do to him and Loki as small children when they reached for what wasn’t theirs. Strange released her hand before Thor could make his decision, however. “I regret not meeting you sooner, Ms. Lewis.”

“Well, I am a peach.” She shifted minutely into Thor’s space and Thor couldn’t help the feral grin that clenched his teeth. “Alright. Well. It’s been real...strange. Catch you on the flip side, Doc.”

“The bottle, Ms. Lewis?” The Doctor looked to her left arm, where she held the magical whiskey bottle tight under the bow of her elbow.

Darcy frowned. “Can it be a gift too? I’ll trade you this super sweet cloak I just got.”

“The spell won’t last.” He held out his hand, and Darcy deposited the bottle into his skinny, spindly fingers with a petulant sigh. Thor watched as he upturned it, a sigil glowing brightly on the bottom of the amber glass. He changed it, adding ruins Thor didn’t understand, and turning it slightly counter-clockwise before holding it out for Darcy to take. “You’ll need to bring it back, occasionally, to be refreshed. Your cloak as well, should it ever be damaged.”

Darcy took it with greedy hands, holding it up to the light as if she’d never seen it before. Thor could practically smell the man's magic on it. Hm. “Oh dude, really? Sweet. Never ending whiskey.”

“Anything you should want,” the Doctor corrected and Thor thought, enough of that.

“In the capacity of beverages,” he added to their two-way conversation, very pointedly. “We should go. Sir Happy awaits.”

“We’ll speak again,” the Doctor assured her, mouth pulled into a frown Thor suspected was simply a part of his face. “Until then - good luck, Ms. Lewis.”

Once safe in the confines of Stark’s car, Darcy turned to him. “That was weird, right? Like. I was getting some sketchy vibes, there at the end?” The bottle glinted in the crook of her arm, lovers token if ever there was one and Thor wanted to smash it with the full might of his hammer.
He stared at her hard for a long moment, hit by the tidal-wave realization that Darcy was largely unaware of her effect on men. She didn’t know. She didn’t know what a vixen she could be, or the heads she did turn. Barton had said it rightly; Darcy held a number of gazes. Bartons. Barnes. Even the Captain wasn’t immune to the sway of her hips, and it was only Stark’s strange penchant for paternal awareness in regards to Darcy that kept him from looking, and even that was swayed ever so slightly when Darcy wore a particularly low cut garment. But Darcy always seemed so surprised when a man paid her any attentions. Perhaps even, she’d doubted Thor’s interest once upon a time.

Strange wanted her, as badly as any man might and more for the magic, and Darcy did not know. “He would fuck you if given even half the chance.” The more sensible part of Thor wanted to say he’d have taken you to bed, but such language did not always speak to Darcy. “In fact, I think he’d do a great deal for the opportunity to have you.”

Darcy blinked at him owlishly, pretty mouth falling open on an oh of surprise. “No? That’s...Ridiculous. I mean, he’s a doctor. And a wizard. Or whatever.”

"And I, a prince and a God. And Barton, a spy, and a hero. And Barnes - more the same, really, but with marginally better hair." How had he not seen the seeds of doubt inside of her? Perhaps he was blinded by her beauty and her confidence. “The cape and the bottle - they were not small magics. Indeed, that cape is older than I am. And the sigil on the bottle requires you to return to him. He was flirting. A bit desperately and with a taken woman, I might add.”

Carefully, Darcy set both the cloak and the bottle in the seat beside her and folded her arms beneath her chest. It was a nervous gesture he’d come to know on her - one he wished he’d understood sooner, and better. “He was just helping because he’s Tony’s friend.”

“Believe me when I say, Princess - no one likes Stark that much.” Indeed, Stark’s friends were few and far between and mostly those living within the tower with him. Stark kept his friends where he could protect them. Everyone else, helped him because they owed him favor, or indeed - they hoped to indebted him. Strange was most likely no different. “You, however - are very likable. Barton and Barnes would agree with me.”

“I’m...Available,” Darcy argued, holding tighter now to her middle, and Thor hated the sight of her hunched shoulders. “I mean - they’re my friends and shit. But it isn’t like...Okay! Listen. I know I’m a babe, but I’m not like. First string babe. I’m just...here. And they can trust me. I’m safe. It isn’t anything...More than that. Doctor Strange - it’s not like that. You’re just jealous.” She said it with a smile cast his way but the little tease between them fell flat.

“I am,” Thor told her, no levity in his voice. “I am viciously jealous when it comes to you. Because I know what it looks like when a man wants you so badly it haunts his dreams and waking world alike. I see it in their eyes, Princess. I know what it is to be sick with desire for you. To want you to
the point of delirium.” Like lightning, Thor reached out and snatched her arm away from her middle. He hauled her closer and kissed her wrist. “Strange will go to bed tonight and dream of you. Like a succubus, you will haunt him. Visions of you, naked and spread out below him. He’ll dream of your kisses, of the lush give of your body. He’ll wake, hungry for it but he will never know it.”

She didn’t struggle in his grasp, just curled her palm over the curve of his jaw. “You don’t need to be jealous, you know. I’m here with you.”

She didn’t believe him, not in the slightest. “Your faith I’ll never doubt again.” Not when he could feel it flutter like a dove’s wing, inside of him. Not when it filled him with righteous light. “But I see what you do not, Little Girl. I see how they want you, and I hate it.”

“Because I’m easy...convenient, I mean—”

“I’ll not have you disparage yourself in my presence.” He squeezed her wrist in warning, little bones grinding together with the faint pinch of pain. “Not so long ago, Barton came to me. He asked me why I had not pursued you.” Darcy pursed her lips and looked away—doubt. Thor could almost smell it. “At first, I told him you were like a sister to me.” He laughed at the thought, the weak attempt, the blatant lie. “And Barton called my bluff and said - no man looks to Darcy Lewis like a little sister. You are kind and competent and brave and beautiful beyond this world. Indeed I expect Asgard will grow envious of you and I both, for different reasons. You’ve a body made for pleasure, pet. And a mind made for war. You are dangerous and no man can resist that.” With his other hand, he cupped her face and pressed his thumb to the full swell of her bottom lip. “You don’t think they want you for you. Do you doubt me too? For all that you’ve forgiven me?” When she didn’t speak—Thor hurt. “Perhaps I have bewitched you. Even so, my atonement shall continue then, until you believe me.”

“I believe you,” she murmured, against his thumb. “I just...don’t understand why.”

“Curious. You believe in me, but not yourself.” He leaned down far enough to kiss the corner of her mouth. “Than I shall believe in you enough for the both of us.”

Darcy nodded against him, accepting his words. “Why did Clint ask about us?”

Thor laughed, and leaned back, letting Darcy’s face go, but holding her hand in his own. “He was ascertaining as to whether or not he was...stepping on my toes, I think that’s how he put it. And I told him that a man who did not choose you first did not deserve your heart. And so I would suffer without you. I did not know at the time he was married,” he added, somewhat more darkly.
“He and I are friends,” she stressed, sliding her free hand between their joined palms. She was so small; he felt his cock stir at just the sight of how his one hand dwarfed hers both. “Honestly - he gets with Natasha sometimes. They have an understanding. I don’t know why he bothered with me if he’s getting with that.”

“Barton likes competent women,” Thor noted, still marveling at the level of ignorance Darcy had fallen into in regards to her own appeals. “Strong, competent women. A total boss,” he added, vague memories falling into place. “That is what he called you. You are strong, Princess. And smart. And to our kind - it is as much an aphrodisiac as anything else. I’d hazard a guess it is what draws the Sergent to your flame as well.” He caught her gaze. “It certainly caught my attention. And as to the lady Spider - you are night and day. Hers is a body made for speed. Lithe, nimble. Yours...” He grabbed at her, making slow work of tracing her curves. “Yours is a body made for opulence. Women like Natasha,” and Jane, Thor did not say. “They are bread and water. But you-you is abundance, you are grandeur. How does the saying go...an embarrassment of riches?” He licked her mouth - not so much a kiss but a taunt. “A filthy, shameless show of wealth.”

Carefully, Darcy shifted in the seat, and slid herself into his lap, thighs straddling his own. Thor captured her hips like he’d been holding her as such for years - and not a single day. Only a day. “You don’t like that... that other men might want me.”

“Might,” Thor echoed. He would do better to fuck the doubt right out of her, he would. “As if there is any doubt. Other men do want you, Princess. Badly. They covet you when you're mine - and I forget that we are new, for my desire for you is as familiar as a lullaby. It galls me to the core that Barton knows what is like to bury himself in your pretty---”

“Ohhhh-kay,” Darcy cut him off, peppering a quick few kisses to his mouth. “Enough of that. How about instead of being jealous, you just be smug. I could maybe get used to someone being smug over me.”

“Smug.”

“You say all these men want me?” Again, she spoke as if it was nothing more than a theory. For such a brilliant woman - Darcy could be blind it would seem. “But you have me.”

Thor pushed up into the spread of her hips. Hard - he was already so hard for her, just by the press of her body against his. “So I do.”
“Doctor Strange - you said he wanted too----” She didn’t finish the sentence, just rolls her eyes like she’s humoring him on the subject of Doctor Strange and his blatant overtures. “But here I am, going home with you. So be smug.”

“I haven’t had you long enough to earn the right to be smug,” Thor considered, pushing his hands up the hem of her dress to reveal her pale thighs. “I’ll need to have you again until I’ve earned it.”


*When a dog pees on a tree, it just makes all the other dogs want to pee on it more.* “I suspect my having you will only make them covet you more. My having you did not quell the Doctor’s desires, after all.”

“So let them.” She was still wet with him, when he slid his fingers into her cunt, her silky little knickers shoved to the side. Wet with the both of them, really. She rolled her hips, taking his offering deeper, little hands bracketed on his shoulders. Thor thought nothing should be so easy as getting inside of her in the backseat of Stark’s town car, nothing but dark glass dividing them from any seeing eye. “You’ve got me.”

“I will,” he assured her, forcing her thighs farther apart by spreading his own. She hissed, falling harder on his curled fingers. “But only when you believe we are equals in all things.”

“You’re like a fucking---- *God.*” The word broke on a strangled gasp as he wretched back her head, hand tangled firmly in her hair. It forced her harder down into the thrust of his fingers and he pulled again, sharper this time, forcing her to ride his hand as if the devils themselves were after her. “*God!*”

“I am. I am your God,” he murmured, spreading her legs further apart with his own, forcing her to bounce in his lap, clutching at his shoulders. “And yet, I will worship you until you believe yourself my equal, and beyond. I worship thee - and you pray to me. *Equals*. How you can conspire against yourself so - I have seen you quell men with a *look*. To find fault in your confidence pains me. What say you, that?”

“I’m supposed to worship you. You’re the God, I’m the...the...”She didn't seem to have a word for what she was, though Thor had many. "I'm supposed to worship you. Not the other way around.

“Does the disciple dare to tell her God what it is she should be doing?” He spans her again,
pressing down into the pink mark, where it surely smarts the most. “Does she dare to tell he God what it is he should be doing? That's not really for you to decide. Would you rebel on your knees, pet? Do you say I’m wrong?”


“I will worship you, as I see fit, and you will allow it. Perhaps it means this,” he spanked her again, hard, three times, until her body began to tremble. “Perhaps I worship with my tongue but not my words. Perhaps I worship with you on your knees, choking. Either way - it will be worship.” She couldn’t come like this. Close, but not quite, and she rode his fingers all the more desperate for it, even though it must have hurt, where she was forced to pull at the tangle of her own hair caught in his claw. “What do you need?” He bit at her collar just above the neckline of her disheveled dress, skirts askew and crumpled. “Make your demands , Princess.”

“I---” She began again, thick hips rolling with every thrust now, making a new angle for herself. Thor let her fall on a third finger, felt dizzy - nay, almost giddy at the way she took it so sweetly, opening up for him like a flower blossoming. “Yes. Yes---Please .”

He’d give her a fourth if she only just asked. Hell - he’d let her ride his whole fist like a wanton little lush, all the while trying not to spend in his trousers at the sight of her. “Tell me, Darcy. Say your prayers.” Let me worship you.

But she couldn’t. Not while she still thought him better in some obscure way. Not while she was still operating under the allusion that he was doing her a favor, but petting at her pretty cunt. As if Thor hadn’t been lost in his desire for her, sick with it, plagued by it, desperate for it. In truth, their pining had been in anyway mutual, Darcy had carried on with far more aplomb.

“Please,” she cried again - though there were no tears this time and for that, Thor was almost grateful. “ Please .”

“Your God is gracious,” he assured her, pulling her forward, unto himself, into a sharp, bruising kiss. He turned his hand just enough to let his thumb brush her clit and she cried into his mouth, hips stuttering, riding the new friction. It wouldn’t be long now, for either of them both. “ Pray for it, Princess .”
this chapter wasn't supposed to be porn but then Darcy was being all self conscious and Thor had to correct her.
Chapter 12

enough gratuitous smut. or not. more smut. but it's plot driven smut and next chapter stuff happens. I just needed to tidy up the Clint-angle.

***

Tony was waiting for them in the garages when they finally disentangled from each other. Sir Happy had parked the metal beast sometime before and had dispatched himself to wherever it was he went when not serving Stark.

“Finally come up for air?” Stark asked, bushy brow arched. “I’ll have to have the car detailed now. I hope you’re happy.”

“Aww don’t be like that, Dad,” Darcy narrowed her eyes at home, looking for all the world fully prepared to slap him, even with her hair a muss and her dress askew. “I was real’ careful not to spill.” She licked her lips purposefully and Thor felt the draw as if she’d licked his--- In truth, she hadn’t used her mouth on him - not in the car at least. He was still achingly hard and sticky-fingered.

“You’re the literal worst,” Tony said, eyeing her speculatively. Honestly. “It’s like you actually came from my loins. You’re awful. Why do you have a cape? Capes are embarrassing. Thor’s Red Cape of Ridiculousness is enough.”

Darcy held the cloak aloft, and the slinky fabric fluttered and curled at the hem, like fog creeping through the forest. “Strange gave it to me. To hide the magical mojo all up in my business. I don’t have to wear it all the time, which is good because it’s not exactly inconspicuous. Like, why not a nice pea coat maybe? Denim jackets are in right now. I don’t know. I mean. Capes? Although, if it had sleeves, I could be like Fury!”

“That weirdo gave you a cape? Is it like his cape?” Tony shook his head. “Scratch that. No time. Suit up, Big Guy. We got Baddies in the Bayous. The Avengers are going South. Wheels up in thirty.”

“Code?” Darcy asked sharply, all her sarcastic bravado fading into something a great deal more intense. “It isn’t New York, right? What are we looking at?”
“Something in the swamps ripping alligators in half and eating their insides. Nothing too serious but the locals are distressed. More of a PR move than anything else. We’re sending Barnes, Thor, and Clint. New jet can make it in a quarter of the time of a direct commercial flight so - thirty-two minutes max. My doing. Nice, right? High five.”

Darcy did not high his five but instead left Tony standing with his hand raised like a fool. “Oh my God.” Even out of context, Thor felt the word in his bollocks. An angry Darcy was no less attractive than a demure, teary one and he was already so hard. Thirty minutes - he would make do. “Did you make that call?” Darcy all but snarled. “You’re such a fuck, Tony!”

“Hakuna your tatas, daughter. Besides Banner and myself - they’re the nearest team available and this isn't exactly coded Green.”

An acceptable reason and Thor watched Darcy scowl her acceptance. “Well, why the fuck aren’t you going?”

“Because stomping on something that eats alligators sounds like Thor’s kind of fun babycakes, and I’m not one to rain on anyone’s parade.” Tony paused, always an expert in the use of theatrical silences. “Except yours. You were mean to me earlier.” He rolled his eyes and sighed. “I’m a tech guy, Darcy. I do the robots, and the aircraft and you know - potentially explodey things.”

“Sometimes things are only potentially explody because you touched them.” Darcy sighed too, just as drawn and dramatic as Tony, before turning to Thor. “This would be a great time for you to practice being smug and not jealous. Don’t whump on Clint too hard.”

“That depends entirely on friend Barton,” Thor returned easily, making a show of cracking his knuckles. Darcy huffed, and hooked her hand into the bend of his elbow, hauling him along to the elevators.

“He’s gonna run his mouth,” she told him flatly, as the double doors met with a mechanical whirrrr. “It’s what he does. I knew and accepted that when I---Went out with him.” She paused. “Yesterday. So. Yeah. He’s gonna want to brag. Especially to men who have shown. You know. A little bit of interest.”

Thor took some small measure of offense to that. A little bit of interest. There was nothing little about Thor’s anything, thank you. Wheels up in thirty, he thought. “Are you that confident in your in your skills?”

She raised a clever brow at him. “Should I not be?”
And so she was confident in her bed-skills, but not herself. Thor took note of that. “I’m fully confident you could wreck any man who takes you to bed. Leave them all ruined for anyone else.”

“Well I don’t know about that,” Darcy blushed, but her eyes were bright and sparkling. “I do alright.”

The doors opened to their quarters, and Thor wasted none of his remaining twenty-six minutes, crowding up against her in the foyer. “I’ve crossed a number of galaxies, races, species,” he told her, lifting her easily to perch on the credenza. The mirror behind it rattled against the wall and Thor scarcely recognized the heat in his eyes. “I’m a thousand years old, Princess. I’ve bed—a great number of women.” More than he could count, though he was certain Darcy wouldn’t appreciate such as failing on is part. “I’ve only had you twice now, and I know - I’ll never find better.” His mother had always claimed— matters of the heart made everything richer. Thor supposed that was true in part.

“And it just keeps getting better, doesn’t it?”

“Your bedroom talk is kind of weird, but I’m really into it.”

“We’re not in a bedroom,” he murmured, into the soft pale skin below her ear. “I’ll need you before I go. If I don’t - I won’t be able to think of anything else besides the way your----”

Confidence falters. The way your body fits mine. The way your mind cannot encompass your own perfection. The way tears cling to your lashes when you---

She undid his pants, little hands sliding into the tight confines to free his aching cock. She used both and it was --- nearly too much. Thor couldn’t look. Couldn’t bring himself to pay witness to the utter deviance of it - both her hands wrapped around him, the head of his cock still uncovered, wet at the tip, leaking like he was some green lad still untried. Darcy did that to him. Made him feel like all his years of bedding women across the cosmos did not apply here.

“Are you sore?” He forced himself to ask, hands flat against the credenza, body pressed into hers. “Do you hurt?” She had bled and Thor hadn’t known. He’d not make the same mistake.

“No, but I’d like too. A little maybe.”

Twenty-two minutes. He had twenty-two minutes and if she continued to speak as such, he’d last perhaps three of them. If he tried his very best.
“Turn around.” The pitch of his voice had fallen to something low and feral, and he barely moved to give her space to obey. He kicked off his boots on shaky legs and shoved down his trousers with only one hand. He threw his shirt—somewhere. “I want you from behind. I want you to see what my little bit of interest looks like on you.”

“Thor,” she cried out when he forced her to turn, and he spanked her for it, lightly, over the faded red handprint of her last reprimand. “God!”

“Better,” he assured her, hiking her dress up, and up and over her head. He tore the fastener of her bra—bra, clear off, the delicate metal clasps crumbling uselessly beneath his rough hands. He left her panties - he quite liked the way the dark lace stood out against her pale, bruised skin. “My marks look good on you,” he murmured, thumbing hard over the fresh bruises on her hips. “Little badges of valor. Warrior marks. Symbols of your strength. I like them.”

“I’m not sure I’d call it—ah!” She gasped as he pushed into her, rough and without any other warning. “Valor.”

“Ah but there is a great deal of courage to be found in submitting. You said yourself, did you not?” For all that this was the third time he’d taken her - it was just as shocking as the first. Just as soul-crushing, just as cleansing. “Shall it always be like this?” He asked her, hoping she felt it too.

“I—Fuck—fucking hope so,” she managed, teeth rattling as he fucked into her. She had her finger splayed, sweaty palms already slipping on the smooth surface. This was - a great deal rougher than he intended. A great deal rougher than the last time, or the one before that. But she took it so prettily like it nearly wasn’t enough at all.

He lifted her off her feet to get a better angle, letting her prop herself up on her elbows. She looked at him in the mirror, pretty mouth open on a gasp with every hard drive of his cock. He held her, one arm hooked under the belly, and took her by the throat with his other hand. Gently, really, but his palm fit around the whole of her throat like it was made to be there. “Ah ah—I said look at yourself.”

She did - and what a sight she made, crying breathlessly on his cock, beautiful breasts bouncing with every push, ass high where he held it. Her hair fell in a tangled mess and he thought to pull it but couldn’t bring himself to release the delicate expanse of her throat to do so. Pity.

Every plunge of his cock pushed her against his hand, forcing choked little cries from her red mouth.
Thor looked away, certain it would be his undoing. *Eighteen minutes.* He pulled her back flush against him, and clear off the credenza, nothing but his hand at her throat, and the bar of his arm low on her belly to hold her in place, speared on his cock. Surely it hurt - burned and ached and the tender pain would remain long after he departed and she would *love* it. He fucked her like that, knees bent, the shallow, trapped thrust stealing his breath. He wouldn’t last. He wouldn’t last like this, not with her red-faced, and gasping for what little air he’d let her have, feet dangling against his shins. He’d spend himself all over her thighs this way.

He moved her forward with too much force, the edge of the sideboard biting hard into her thighs and he’d have worried that it was too much but she cried out and shuddered, pushing into the hurt like a balm. There would be marks all over her thighs and he would kiss every single one of them - *later.* Her fingers curled tightly around his arm at her waist, not pushing him away, but holding him in place like she needed it harder, like she needed more. His palms slid from her throat to grasp at her cheeks, forcing her mouth open where her face hovered only inches from the mirror. Her breath fogged the glass, but he could still see her tears.

He never *ever* stopped fucking into her. Stars could explode and the sky could eat itself whole, and Thor could not have stopped.

“Do you like it?” He asked her, biting the words into her damp temple. “Does it hurt?”

“Yes.” Her eyes closed, but he did not reprimand her, not when she looked so pretty, struggling to speak when Thor had her mouth caught in his grip. “Yes---please .”


*Thirteen minutes.*

He pushed her face down over the counter, moving back just enough to give her room, one hand sliding under her throat again. The other he used to grasp at her ass, nails biting into the soft giving flesh, thumb brushing over her *other* hole just to make her clench her pretty cunt over his cock. It was only the hand holding her throat that kept her from face-planting into the mirror and Thor felt his balls draw up on that little trust alone.

“You’d have me take you like you didn’t matter, wouldn’t you?” He bit out, struggling not to do just that. It was hard. Her round, ample ass fit to perfectly in his palm and it made no sense that something so big could seem so *small.* “You’d have me *fuck* you like you were some nameless whore, use you to my pleasure with no care for your own. You’d love that.”
Perhaps - another day they could play at that. But now-now was for his little bit of interest and Darcy’s strange, fluid confidence.

“Shall I take your mouth like I’m doing you favors by letting you choke on it?” He knew it to be true from the way she grew wetter, fluttering around him like the words alone were too much. “I’ll not do it, Princess.” Please, she prayed, and Thor heard it like a song. “No. You’re nothing so common as that. I’ll have you like you were chosen to bed Kings and please Gods. You don’t have to like it, Little Girl- but we both know you will. I’ll make you come how I want you to come.” Ten minutes. He wouldn’t need the whole of them. “And you’ll love it, won’t you? Look at you - grinding your little cunt against the furniture, desperate to come.”

And she was, all but riding the edge of the credenze and Thor thought - it must hurt. He pulled her hips away, letting her cheek smack against the countertop, hand slipping from her throat, pinning her down instead, fingers tangled in her hair.

“Your pleasure is mine,” he told her, folding himself down over her little body. hips still slamming into the round give of her ass. “Your pain - mine too. I shall give you both until you believe you are worthy of such gifts. Do you understand?” She did not answer, and Thor pressed her cheek harder against the countertop. “Princess.”

“Yes, God. Yes.”

“They all want you.” He fucked every word into her with a cruel, punishing snap of his hips. “And you do not believe it. A little bit of interest. Hm. You can’t fathom they take themselves in hand at night dreaming of this.” Ten minutes. “I did, pet. Do you doubt my affections? Can’t you feel them? I touched myself in your bed, Little Girl, grasping at the scent you’d left on your sheets. Spilled all over my fist and wished it was you. They do the same. Barton had you, and still, you doubt how such a man could want you.” He was losing himself, to the feel of her cunt, the harsh sound of slapping skin, the coil of heat in his body. He could feel the rise in her, the tension in the air sure as any storm. “Do you doubt that I want you?”

“No!” She forced her eyes open and wrenched back her head to catch his gaze in the mirror. “You want me.”

“Yes.” He was close enough now, pressed down on her, that he could lick her cheek and he did, tasting the hint of tears there. “Say it again, and ride me. Just like this.”
As he moved, he moved her with him, propping her palms on the edge of the countertop and pulling her body somewhat more upwards. Himself he moved away, knees bent, just enough that she was forced to follow if she had any hope of keeping him inside of her. “Say it.”

“You want me,” she said again, eyes clenched shut as she pushed back on his cock, knuckles white where she curled them, pushing off her palms to fuck herself back faster, harder. “You want me. You want me. You want---”

“I do.” Gently, he tilted her head up, made her look into the mirror where she bounced on her toes and his cock alike. ‘I want you, always.” She was a vision in pink and red, cast entirely in his shadow. He moved with her body, pleasure coiled in his body sure to burst. Seven minutes. “I want you to come.”

“God .”

***

He laid her in the new bed, bare and salt-skinned, already half asleep or just come-drunk by the time Thor had managed to scramble his sweat-soaked thighs into his armored breeches. Leather was...not ideal in such moments. “Hey,” Darcy rasped and Thor hated the thought of leaving her now when she looked so tender. He came to her bedside, sure he had two minutes if he had any, and kissed her brow, while her little hands wandered, tugging at his pockets. “Come back to me, kay?”

“It’s my favorite part of any return.”

***

When he tumbled out of the elevator to the quint jet launch pad, he’d only got his leather trousers and boots on, both undone, with his armor and cape over his shoulder, hammer hanging in his hand. He was admittedly still a little come-drunk, somehow only half-sated, for all that he’s had Darcy twice in only the span of a few hours. The sun was low on the horizon, casting pink and orange streaks across the cloudless sky. Barton and Barnes were waiting for him, dressed to a T in their Midgardian tactical wear. Thor wondered if Barnes could smell the sex on him like he had before. He couldn’t say if it was his intention, for them to know - he just wanted her once more, before departing.

As it would turn out, Barnes could smell it on him. When his eyes went a little wide, nostrils flaring, Thor could only grin. Smug, Darcy had said. “Am I interrupting?”
“Wait—Weren’t you just with Darcy?” Barnes gaze siddles between Barton and Thor. “You’ve been with her all day, right?”

“Yeah, Tony said Darcy was handling Thor stuff, remember?” Barton frowned at Barnes. “You were there when he told me.”

“Handling my stuff,” Thor echoed, grinning. “That is one way to say it, I suppose. Yes, Sergeant Barnes. I’ve been with Darcy since this morning. Last night too,” he added.

“Yeah - she left after...Uh.” Barton ducked his head, grinning. “Well, you know---”

“I don’t think we should know,” Barnes cut in quickly, taking his seat across from Thor. “Wouldn’t be appropriate.”

“S’not what you were saying literally five minutes ago when you asked how my date was going, buddy.” Barton flashed a grin at Thor. “Darcy’s a damn hellcat. We barely made it through dinner before she was hauling me back to my place. Honestly, if I wasn’t married - I’d feel a little used. She fucks like she’s got a score to settle.” He paused, a far-off look in his eye. “Fuckin’ hot though. Didn’t think I’d be into hate-fucking someone I actually like - but Darcy’s like...Shit. The only damn reason I lasted is...I was actually a little afraid to come before her.”

“Ladies first, Friend Barton.” *A score to settle.* Thor supposed in a sense, that was true. Of course - Darcy did not know it was Sif and Thor knows he’ll rue the day she inevitably finds out. The idea that Darcy might have taken Clint to bed as some sort of petty leveler...pleased him in a way. Had she agreed to his proposition with jealousy in her heart? It shouldn’t make his blood hot, shouldn’t make his mouth curl at the corners in a wicked smile, but it does. Even born out of rage - Darcy had done them a great justice. Equal in all things, after all. And too, there was something tangible now, in the distance between Jane to Darcy - Sif and Barton, their own strange milestones of separation.

“Shit though - I just...could not get over her body. It was like I was sixteen again - never so much as touched a woman. I gotta admit - I ain’t never put my hands on tits like hers. It was like a religious experience. Whole night - nothing like it. I don’t think she’s gonna call me back,” Barton said with a laugh, but Thor heard the faint note of disappointment there. “She sort of did a fuck-and-run.”

“Maybe you weren’t that good,” Barnes suggested, on a smirk.
And Thor could roll with the joke, let Barton’s pride take the hit, but Darcy wouldn’t thank him. “She did not go home displeased,” Thor said, on a sigh. “She just doesn’t care to play second - or third - fiddle. You have your Lady Wife, and at times, the Lady Spider. The Lady Darcy...couldn’t fathom why you’d want her too.” It felt---it felt as if he was spilling a secret. “Perhaps don’t tell Darcy I’ve said as much.”

“Um. Because she’s gorgeous, fierce and kind of mean and I find that combination terribly, terribly attractive. Seriously - my wife makes Nat looks like a happy camp counselor.” Barton paused. “Don’t tell Nat I said that.”


“Excuse you - I asked Thor if he was interested - and I waited until she shot you down. And I was very upfront about the situation! That’s downright respectful.”

“Yeah, if you’re a dick.”

“You’re only saying that because she shot you down!”

“No, I’m saying that because I’m not a dick.” Barnes pointed a finger - an ominous metal one. His arm is a marvel of Midgard ingenuity. Thor had always been impressed “It’s like you said. She only went out with you because she had a score to settle.”

“No, that’s---That’s not even what I said.” Barton looked put-upon anyway, frowning in his seat. His face was sort of made for frowning - it was an expression that suited him for all that he tended to be the more pleasant of their bunch. “I mean. It doesn’t even make sense. What score?”

Thor kicked his feet out again, boots tied tightly in place. He folded his hands over his stomach. “I bed a woman last time I was in Asgard, and the Lady Darcy found out. She was displeased. I suppose, given that you’re married and otherwise entangled, Darcy pegged you for something safe. With Barnes - there was a possibility for hurt feelings.”

Barnes, to his merit, only shrugged. “Fair enough.”
“You!” Barton turns on him, wide-eyed and merrily offended. “You said you weren’t interested.”

“I said no such thing.” Thor dressed with eases, pulling on his armor, and tying his boots. “You didn’t ask me if I was interested,” he interjects, securing his vambraces in place. “Indeed, you called me out when I made to deny my interests. You asked if I intended to pursue her.”

“And you didn’t have any, so....”

“None at all,” Thor agreed and it had been true. “My previous liaison with Jane made any attempts seem gauche, and perhaps greedy,” he added, rather pointedly. “Indeed, on Asgard, it would be taken as a great insult to Darcy.” Thor hadn’t intended to pursue Darcy. He hadn’t expected her to pursue him though - certainly hadn’t expected them to come together a little punch-drunk on magic and miscommunication.

“Okay, so what are we even arguing about?” Barton blinked at him. “For real. What are we arguing about?”

“ We were arguing whether a third woman made you a dick or not,” Barnes muttered.”Thor was just explaining the score.”

“So Darcy was shitty you fucked some broad on Asgard, and fucked me to make it even?” Barton sat up that that, shoulders straightening. “Well shit. Now I’m offended.”

“Are you though? With your wife and your girlfriend? Are you really?” Barnes pegged Barton with a penetrating look. “S’not like you were promising Darce’ anything in return. Quit being a dick.”

“Well, what does it even matter if Thor ain’t gonna go after Darcy.” He crossed his considerable Midgardian arms over his chest. And pouted. Thor laughed.

“Reckon a dame like that won’t sit around and wait for a guy to chase after her.” He looked to Thor, brow furrowed. “Darce’ made a move, yeah?”

“Aye. And I’m a fool, but not so foolish as to tell her no.” In truth - he was weak and grateful. “So in a way, Friend Barton - I must thank you. Had it not been for your perusal, I mightn’t have had the chance.”
“Yeah well. That makes us tunnel buddies now, so *ha*.” He didn’t look particularly pleased about it. “Whatever.”

Tunnel buddies didn’t translate, but somehow, Thor knew it to be offensive. He looked to Barnes for confirmation, who’s scowl had grown a great deal deeper. “Darcy bid me not wail on you too greatly, but I reckon you’d not like me to repeat that to her.”

“Jesus Christ!” Barton threw up his hands. “Fine! I’m a dick! I’m a dick, but let’s not forget---Darcy used *me*.” He scrunched his nose and made a show of sorting his bows in their quiver. “So maybe I’m a dick, but she’s a dick too.”

“And it is by that merit, I believe, that she bid me not beat you grievously for discussing matters of her---body.” Thor shrugged, willing to let it be, if only for Darcy. “All things being equal.”

“Whatever,” Barton muttered, mulishly. “So you and Darcy?”

“For as long as she’ll have me.” Thor would be a liar if he claimed he wasn’t just as compelled to brag. It was a failing in men, truly. Barnes seemed to sense it in him, quelling him with a look. “I’m sure I needn’t crow about Darcy’s many...hallmarks. We are all aware.”

“Some of us more than others,” Barton teased, ribbing Barnes with the sharp point of his elbow. “Eh?”

And well. Thor needn’t boast. However... “And some of us are...three times more aware.”

“Shit, really? I went out with her yesterday!” Barton looked comically torn between offended and impressed.

“It’s four if you count what I did to her in the car on our return to the Tower.” He didn’t *need* to boast. Much. “But truly, who’s counting?”

“I’m gonna gonna.” Barton scoffed, sharpening the tip of an arrow with truly dedicated amount of focus, tongue caught between his teeth. “Who’s counting?”
Barnes continued to frown, though he did stop long enough to punch Barton squarely in the thigh.
“Darcy’s spoiled on you both. That kinda dame you gotta treat right. Take your time with, ya know?
Have patience.”

“She’d not thank you for it.”
Hey y'all, did you miss me?

six hundred reviews, dudes. That is fricken nuts for a rare pair on here. Goodness. I love y'all.

Lots of movement in this chapter, tugging us along for big and baddier things! Whoo!

They returned to Stark Towers in good spirits, the Quintjet cutting through a cloudless horizon. No better omen than a starlit sky, and the moon almost fat, hanging high above. He would hazard a guess it was closer to morning than night at that point. Thor tossed a tooth into the air with a merry little whistle, palming the great white incisor with absolute glee. He’d thought to have kept the whole head before the suited men of SHIELD had bundled it up and hauled it away, but not before Thor had ripped the fang from the beasts open, gaping maw. “Diplomatic immunity,” he’d argued, with a feral grin, tossing the bloody tooth from hand to hand with a flourish. “A victor's trophy is an important part of my heritage. Of course, we could battle for it, if you’d like. Winner may take it for his own.” The Agent had declined with a nervous sort of grin that made both Barton and Barnes laugh outright. He’d carve it into a knife perhaps. The curve was right for it, and the length adequate. Barnes and Barton dispersed at the garages, to nurse their aching muscles and weary minds. No grievous wounds to be sure, but the battle had been hearty and long-lasting. Not a bilgesnipe, not exactly. But not exactly not one. A rest was well deserved.

“Genetic modification gone wrong,” Stark told him, as Thor stepped into the labs. The cool air bit at the salted sweat of his skin. “This is how Sharknado is going to happen. Just because we can, doesn’t always mean we should.”

“Words to live by, truly.” Thor threw himself down onto a barstool near a long, cluttered table. “You wished to speak to me?” He had summoned Thor through the Quintjet, even as they landed. Only Thor. Specifically Thor. And so he could only assume the nature of Stark’s interest. “You wish to speak of Darcy.”

Stark shot him a steely, glinted gaze. “You want to take her away. You want to ferret her off planet. You want to cavort across the---”

“There shall be very little cavorting, I assure you,” Thor cut him off quickly. Best not to let Tony get ahead of himself, after all. “I nominated her to represent Midgard in the Council of Nine. She would serve to speak for all of Earth. It is a great honor - one I feel Darcy is well equipped for, given what she’s accomplished in a small amount of time as your Peace Ambassador.. She is...relatively
speaking...non partisan. Her concern is for Earth, and no one man alone. I would welcome her to care for all the Nine Realms, as I suspect they would be better for it.”

Stark chewed that over, mustache twitching as he fiddled with this and that across his scattered table. “What does she need?”

“What?”

“Need, man! What does she need? To go to Asgard. To...I don’t know. To feel comfortable there. Safe.” He paused, a familiar and peculiar expression twitching at his mustache. Tony was prepared to answer his own question, Thor knew this by the set of his mouth. “I’ll build her a suit.”

He couldn’t help the little rumble of laughter that escaped him. “I think it not particularly wise to send a nonpartisan, intergalactic representative to a peace meeting in a war machine.” A somewhat antiquated one at that. They’d not take insult, but they might laugh and pride bled worse than anywound. “That said, gravity pulls harder on Asgard than most of the Nine Realms, and especially Earth. When I first came to your planet, I often felt as if I might fly away, should I step too hard. Perhaps something to circumvent that, and ease the strain on her body.”

“Miniature-scale gravity polarization,” Stark hummed, pulling up a blank holoscreen, fingers dancing as he brought an idea to life. “Perhaps something---no. A shoe. A boot. Boots. Darcy likes boots. Hmm.” Thor watched him work for a long while, before Tony remembered he was there. “The Ambassadors Ball is a little more than a week away. Once it’s gone and we get all these international peace pipes the fuck out of my tower - you do what you need to train her. Get her ready. Clint can help. Nat, even. I’ll call in some favors with Phil---”

“She’s not going to war, Tony.” Thor couldn’t help the gentle way he spoke - Tony cared for Darcy. Greatly. “This isn’t a mission, nothing so covert. She will serve as...as---” He struggled to find the right word, something to translate for an Earthen tongue. “My father is the King of Kings. The Council - they are those Kings and Queens he rules. Darcy would be...in some respects - Queen of Earth. I would swear to you on my dying star - I will protect her, but there shall be nothing to protect her from, that she cannot protect herself. The Council is very much respected. They hold the King’s ear.” Let friend Stark never know it was Loki who sat the throne. He would not understand. “Something like a Queen,” Thor amended. “They petition my father – or whatever monarch holds the throne in Asgard – on behalf of their realm. They serve their realm, and the Nine Realms alike, a unified force. They’re not elected officials, they’re appointed by the King, and they petition the King directly. The members of the Council work together – and offer aid where they can, but it is the King who sanctions it. Darcy would serve the position very well, I think. It would do the Nine Realms good to remember Midgard is a considerable ally.”

“We’re not,” Tony said, with no little grudge. “You said so. Our tech is adorable to you – it’s like we’re building a world with Legos and you’re over there with frickin laser windows. We’re----
we’re stupid! We’re like talking monkeys.”

“Youth is stupid,” Thor could not quell his little snort of laugh. “And Midgard is very young. You are doing well comparatively. Indeed, your advances in the last one hundred years or so are a true marvel. You’re catching up at a significantly faster pace than expected, I assure you. And in truth - there are somethings the Nine Realms might offer to help guide your growth. Knowledge should be shared.”

“We have nothing to offer the Council back,” Tony hedged, and Thor marveled at how alike he and Darcy were, for hadn’t she said the very same thing?

“As I told Darcy – you needn’t offer anything. The Council will still offer aid. While I would not call the Council altruistic, they understand the importance of helping because it’s needed, rather than helping for the sake of earning favor. And too – Earth will not always be young. Time may come that it’s services will be needed. Indeed, it was Earth who captured my brother – no mean feat, I assure you. The Council is grateful. They were quick to welcome the suggestion that a Midgardian be welcomed into the Council once more.”

“Fair.” He tapped his nails along the table and stared at the space of wall beyond Thor’s shoulder for a long, quiet moment. “She’ll be safe?”

“Is she safe here, my friend? Is she safe anywhere?” Thor countered, shrugging one shoulder. He did not mean to sound so callous, but he could only speak the truth. “Darcy sows’ peace through fields of fire and she does so with significant grace and discord alike. Peacekeeping is no way to make friends, I’m sure you’re familiar with the concept.”

“A bit,” Tony snorted “There’s not much profit in peace, I’ll give you that. We wouldn’t have our best detail on Darce’ if it weren’t true.”

Stark was most likely speaking of Barnes, but Thor considered himself among the best and so he did not disagree.“We do our best but nowhere is ever truly safe, my friend. Not for a woman of Darcy’s caliber who has no time for fear, only time for fight. Is any one person who values a world above themselves ever really safe? I do swear upon my dying star to protect her with all that I am, man and Prince and God alike. But I would do better to give the Lady what she needs to protect herself. And what better than the ear of the King of Kings and his Council of Nine.”

“I’m not sure how Earth would feel about Alien Overlords. Scratch that – I know exactly how Earth feels about Alien Overlords. It’s not good. It’s like you said - we’re young. Teenagers don’t like authority figures.”

Thor could not bring himself to tell Tony that Earth was more like a toddler than a teenager- even so, Tony wasn’t wrong in regards to Midgardians. They did not like authority figures, not even their own elected officials. “And such can be considered. Earth has long since governed itself, and we’ve no desire to simply step in and take over. I daresay, we haven’t the time with all else going on in the cosmos. Darcy will petition for aid, and we will administer it with her considerations in mind. Indeed, when a Midgardian last sat the Council, it was suggested we come as Gods and nothing else. Like as not – any aid we do deem necessary, would be rendered from a God, and not an…Alien Overlord. I find Midgardians are more like to accept Religious Intervention over Alien, regardless for what they’ve seen with their own eyes.”

Tony huffed, seeming to take some small offense to that. “Yeah well – most Midgardians just…don’t like being told what to do. We do what we want.”
“You have never been as alone as you have believed, in the cosmos. Am I not proof of that?” Thor was younger than Tony in many ways, but not in this. “You must realize my friend...Midgard has always been a part of the Nine Realms? You were born into the hand of the King of Kings, and you’ve only ever done what you’ve wanted because Asgard allowed it, and even then...most of the time you only thought you were doing what you wanted. We may have been absent for some time, but we are never truly gone, and we have intervened to your benefit a time or two.” Thor remembered his father grumbling about Midgard, and his mother tempering him with a sweet, amused smile. “There are nine realms my friend, and not a few of them somewhat hostile and more hateful for authority than Earth. Honestly – it was rare Midgard caused any true trouble and so it was easy to simply let you be. Especially when the other wars were keen to start wars amongst themselves. Midgard was easy, and easy to ignore. No longer - Asgard would do well to give Midgard the attention she deserves.”

“Are you saying---Are you calling Earth the middle child?”

“Nay,” Thor said patiently. Tony must have been quite stressed to make such a mistake. “Earth is the youngest.”

“The proverbial middle child!” Tony threw up his hands.

“I don’t know what that means, in truth.” He rustled the little leather-bound book Captain Rogers had gifted him from the pocket of his armored trousers and wrote ‘proverbial middle child’ with the attached pencil. “No matter – Darcy can explain it later.”

***

Darcy was settled into her living room, perched on the squishy purple couch, a scatter of papers and binders spread around her. “That was quick. I thought I’d have to wait up until morning...” She flashed him a quick smile, even as her fingers danced across her computer. “Tony let me tap into the Quint-feed. What the hell was that thing?”

“I’d say it was a bilgesnipe, but Agent Coulson has assured me no such beast dwells within your Earthly plains.” Pausing to toe off his boots, and deposit Molijner and the tooth onto the sideboard, Thor took up the seat beside her. “Stark suggested genetic engineering.”

“Who ever made a monster with side mouths - fricken mouths on the side of their body, why - on purpose is just...insane.” She closed her laptop, and turned to look at him proper. “What did they even do with it, anyway?”

“On Asgard, we’d have cooked it over a raging fire and feasted well into the morrow in celebration of our victory over such a beast.” Fighting, feasting, fucking. Asgard was a simpler place. “Agent Coulson took possession of the beast. I suppose they’ll want to investigate it.”
“It’s sort of their thing,” Darcy agreed, collecting her papers into a tidy pile. Cosmetics washed away, and her hair piled messily atop her head, she looked well and ready for bed. She’d been sleeping when he left, and it warmed him to know she’d woken to wait for him. She was wearing a--a---

Thor blinked. “Why are you wearing that blasted cape backwards?” He did not ask, why are you wearing it at all, for even if he loathed it’s existence, he understood it’s necessity.

Darcy looked down, as if just surprised as Thor. “It turned itself into a snuggie.”

“A what ?”

“A snuggie. A snuggie! They were very popular like ten years ago.” She laughed, eyes crinkling at the corners in delight. “It’s like...I don’t know. A robe you wear backwards. A snuggie. It’s actually pretty comfortable. I don’t hate it.”

“Hm.” Thor wasn’t sure how he felt about the cape changing shape to suit her desires. Nothing good, surely. “Have you much work to do?”

“Nothing that can’t wait. I was just going over stuff for the Ambassadors Ball. Confirming the menu with the catering company. Doing a valet count. Finalizing the guest list.” She ran a hand over her face “Jane’s on it.”

“So soon?” Time was a strange beast, one he’d yet to tame, but then, he’d lost a week to Asgard. “Surely it hasn’t been three months. Perhaps she won’t come. Such things aren’t to her taste.” Anything outside the stars fell outside of her taste.

“I didn’t expect her until next month,” Darcy explained, with a sleepy sigh. She curled herself beneath his arm, the damnable cloak moving with her body. “She had a few weeks left at the Observatory.”

“Perhaps she missed us,” Thor said dryly, as he pressed a kiss to Darcy’s wild hair.

“Please.” Darcy snorted, whole body shifting with the shape of her laughter. “She wasn’t in Norway when Tony called her - she was at Erik’s house in England. I recognized the plaid curtains. So I looked her up. Turns out, the observatory kicked her out. She accidentally set fire to the observation
deck with one of her hobglobbed machines and almost destroyed a half-million dollar telescope. They asked her very firmly to leave.”

“"I’m sure if she’d bothered to bring an intern, it never would have happened,” Thor said gamely, knowing it both to be true and pleasing to Darcy. “I’ve personally witnessed you prevent a number of mechanical fires.”

“Right? It was like Priority One - man the fire extinguisher.” She turned her face, the soft skin of her pale cheeks pressing firmly against the armor plates of his chest piece. “We should probably get the rest of your stuff out of your old apartment this week.”

There was some little left; a few books, some of his Midgardian attire, photographs he wasn’t entirely sure he had a right to claim, and a single houseplant they’d bought together, that he watered in quiet shame three times a week.

“You’re probably pretty busy with---with stuff. Press stuff. The Battle of the Not-Bilgesnipe has a fanbase now. I can run by and grab anything you left,” Darcy offered, when too long a silence fell between them. “I know what’s Janes and what isn’t.”

Brave of her, but then - that was simply Darcy's way. “A kind offer, Princess. It won’t long, but I’d not turn away our company, should you wish to come with me.”

“Anywhere, any time.”

Asgard, Thor thought. And soon. “Our friend Tony spoke to me upon my arrival, abou your position on the Council of Nine.”

Darcy hummed, tilting her head up to look at him. “I asked him what it would mean for my position here - Chief Ambassador or whatever. If I’d have to resign my position - since...I don’t even know how long I’ll be gone. You left for an Asgardian day and returned to Earth a week later.”

Thor wished to tell her ... anything she’d like to hear. But he knew in truth - the Council would demand time of her. Asgardian time. They would accommodate her shorter life span, as they had in the past of Midgardians. But council meetings, depending on the subject matter, could take weeks, months even, to be finished. Balancing nine realms was not done in a day. “And what did Tony say?”
“He promoted me to Intergalactic Earth Ambassador - which he doesn’t even have the authority to do,” she grumbled, voice going a little shrill at the end.

“But I do.” And if he did not - he would, as Prince of Asgard, heir to the throne of King of Kings. “What has this convention of...of...” Tony had called the International Ambassadors amassing the tower peace-pipes, but Thor knew that was no proper title. “What has all your hard work been for, bringing the people of the world to your doorstep to unify and learn what it means to fight for peace? What has it been for, but that they might fight the battle with you? Let them have Earth, let them go forth to their homes and stand tall and proud having learned from the best---”

“I am not the best, I’m just one woman---an absolute mess with really great friends----”

“---the best friend they will ever have known,” Thor continued, grinning at the derivish little look on her face. “You have worked so hard to unify your planet, to bring the people of Midgard together. And so now they are, and you--- you are ready to move forward, and unify Migard with the rest of the Nine Realms. You, Darcy Lewis. One woman.”

She crawled into his lap, still swathed in that damnable cloak, and heedless of the soot of battle clinging to Thor’s skin. “You swear you didn’t volunteer me for this shit because we’re fucking?”

“We weren’t bedding when I suggested you take the seat on the Council.” He cupped her face, the warmth of her cheeks a balm to his heart. “My word only served to introduce you to the Council. They’ll keep you on your own merit.”

“No pressure or anything.”

“None at all. I’d have never suggested you, did I not think you more than capable. I am very well versed in politicking,” he reminded her, with a soft smile. What was Thor’s entire life, but a series of political scufflings. He was born to sit the throne, born to serve the cosmos. “I care for Midgard. I love Earth. I would see it well represented.”

“Fine. Fine.” She sat up, squaring her little shoulders like she’d only just come to the decision, though Thor knew she’d never let a chance to travel the skies pass her. “I’ll do it. I’ll---represent Earth. Midgard. But I need---You have to help me get ready. You have to teach me about Asgard. I don’t want to look stupid. I don’t want Earth to look stupid. You need to teach me about...about your family and customs, the other Realms...and things I shouldn’t say or do that are normal here. Stuff they’d find offensive.”
“Smart of you to consider the possibility.” And it was; it only served to prove that Thor had made the right choice. “Anything else?”

“I need to be in better physical shape,” she said, with a steely look. She raised a hand when Thor made to protest. Her shape was perfect, after all. “Hey - I know you’re into it. Soft squishy human is your kink. But, I would feel better knowing I’m not embarrassing my entire planet with my inability to walk up two flights of stairs in a row.”

“I’d carry you.” He normally did, when it came to stairs. And even, occasionally, elevators.

“I feel like that might look worse.” She raised a brow, mouth quirked into a smile that promised she was preparing to say something infuriating or with Thor specifically in mind. “You don’t have to help me Big Guy. Clint’s already offered.”

And so it was infuriating and with Thor specifically in mind, both. “Clint would surely be the better choice,” Thor said, without gritting his teeth too tightly. “As he is human, and understands the limitations of such.”

“That was almost a compliment, nice.” She leaned forward in his lap just far enough to press a kiss to his whiskered cheek. “You wanna come watch him put his hands all over me.”

And Clint would - perhaps even to the benefit of her training and not because Darcy was especially worthy of hands. “Not at all.”

She kissed his lips, grinning against his mouth when he did not return the gestures. “You gonna come watch anyway?”

By the Stars - but he would, if only to torture himself. “Yes.”

“I’m going to meet your family,” Darcy says in turn, nothing so much to do with training with Clint or Thor’s inability to allow it without looming over the both of them like a particularly jealous gargoyle.

“What’s left of it.” Loki. Darcy would meet Loki, wearing his father's face. A terrifying prospect, but worse so...Loki would like Darcy. Odin would have liked Darcy, as much as he could bring himself to like any Midgardian. Their reluctance to kneel and obey, let alone believe and pray, had always
been a point of contention. But Darcy---Darcy could kneel and obey and believe and pray and defend her world with a spine made of Nidavellir Dwarf Star steel. “Are you worried?”

“Should I be?” She countered, spreading her lush thighs farther that she might settle down more firmly into his lap. Thor would have her - right there on her terrible couch - but he suspected three times in one day was her limit. More would require patience and practice. “Like- good ole’ William and Harry made a show of marrying peasants, but you’re not the Prince of England. So like...are we even allowed to date?

He laid his palms over her thighs, let the warmth bleed into him. “You are asking...” He knew what she was asking, and it was hard to answer. “You are asking if...what our future holds, you and I?”

“I suppose so.” She hummed, frowning, shoulders hunching forward in the way they did when she wished she could make herself impossibly smaller than she already was. “I mean...I guess I shouldn’t...I’ve only got like...fifty or sixty years left, you know? And you’re young. So I guess it shouldn’t matter. But sometimes I worry - I’m going to grow old and ugly and you’re never really going to change, are you?”

“No.” Thor couldn’t remember his father aging, although he had. It had simply happened so very, very slowly, it was hard to tell when it happened at all. “Not for some time.”

Darcy was meant to age. Hers was a short lived people, riddled by disease and failing bodies. It was the balance to Midgard, and not a terrible one, for Midgardians treasured life far more greatly than most the Nine Realms. But...but if they were married. If they were married, Darcy could be given the Apple of Iðunn, and remain with him forever, Valhalla and beyond.

“I don’t want to worry about that,” she said, with a peaceable smile, and for that Thor was greatful. He hadn’t yet worked out how to inquire on Asgard as to whether or not their union had solidified as one of marriage, or something else altogether. “What I want to know is - should we...should we not go as...a couple. As us. Should we go to Asgard as...I don’t know...friends?”

“You’re asking if we should hide the nature of our relationship?” Not an unwise plan, Thor thought, given the mechanisms of his brother. But that was its own problem. “My father would know the heart of my feelings for you with but one look. Honesty would serve us best. You are my...You are mine.”

She accepted that without so much a look, and Thor tried not to let it swell his ego too greatly. “And that’s okay? Like were they cool with you dating Jane?”
“They thought we would marry,” Thor admitted. “Were I not with you, I’d be eligible for a political match. As it were, your position on the Council will serve you as a candidate for—” he stopped himself from finishing the sentence. “As someone who should be with me.”

“Queen,” Darcy surmised, eyes wide. “You were going to say queen!”

“I was going to say—yes. Alright. Queen. My wife will serve as Queen, as my mother served as Queen. It is the way of things.”

“Wife.”

“You knew me for what I am since the beginning,” he hedged, with a hopeful smile. She didn’t look angry, only shellshocked. “I have always been a Prince, this you have known. And princes become Kings.”

“That’s a lot to think about.” She touched his face, fingers scratching at his beard. “But I’ve got time, right? To...to come to terms with what being with you means?”

“A great deal of time.” Should Loki maintain his ruse, anyway. Thor wouldn’t serve the Throne until his father’s power passed, and it remained suspiciously absent. “So let your worries rest. My father will like you, and the council will respect you and my people—-I think they’ll quite adore you.”
Hola! This chapter is pretty solidly sized at over 5k.

We are nearing what I thought would be the end. The Ambassador's ball. Cleaning up loose ends with Jane. All that jazz. But I've realized - I'm sort of torn. I could end it here, or I could follow Darcy to Asgard. Let me hear what y'all think of that.

“Just...I don’t know. Go about your business. Do your thing.” Darcy waved at him, a bulky looking camera hanging around her neck from a thick belt. “These pieces...they’re supposed to be like...little windows into the everyday life of a hero. I want to go all out on yours since I can show your face as I did with Tony.” Her mouth curled up at the corner. “It’s just a freeze frame of the hero’s alter ego. I want to show who the Avengers are as people. Wake up. Make your coffee. Water your plants. Do what makes you happy - besides me,” she added when Thor opened his mouth. “Natasha did the ballet thing and that was --- gorgeous. Steve does parkour for fun so that actually sucked. I had to run. Taking thirty pictures of Clint’s ass while he cooked chili and danced to Footloose wasn’t exactly a hardship, though.”

He narrowed his eyes, peering out at her from where he stood in the closet. “You’re baiting me. I won’t fall for it.” But his hands hovered over the pair of denims she liked best, the ones that made bending very difficult but worked marvels for his ass were she to be believed.

“You should wear those jeans I bought you,” she told him, even as he grabbed them from the hanger. “I’m gonna take so many pictures of dat ass.”

“And is it my ass and my mundane exploits the people wish to see?” He shimmied out of his soft sleep pants, letting them fall to the floor of the closet. “Darcy?”

“Are you kidding?” He heard the click of the camera as he was pulling the denims up over his hips, and looked over his shoulder just in time for Darcy to snap another. “I could photoshop a snapping turtle over your face and no one would notice because they’re too busy objectifying your ridiculous body. You are---” She let her gaze slide down him, head cocked to the side. “Yeah. Damn. I look at you and I think - I sit on your face. I’ve won the cosmic lottery.”

“Are you quite finished?” He asked, feeling the back of his neck go pink and hot, terribly pleased by her gaze. He pulled a sweater on over his sleep shirt, the soft knitted buttoned kind Darcy favored, in a deep blue with elbow patches. “Must I wear shoes as well?” He never cared for them, even his
Asgardian leather boots, with the metal studs in the soles, good for conducting electricity. He felt better barefoot and connected with the earth.

“No. Christ. Ugh. You look like a fucking hipster and I love it so much.” She snapped another picture, as he pulled half his hair back into a club-"man bun." “This is better than the lumberjack look. This is....this is millennial bait. I feel honestly very attacked right now. Elbow patches, Thor?”

“You purchased this shirt yourself,” Thor reminded her, exiting the other door of the closet into the master bath. “Is it not to your liking?”

“Shut up and brush your teeth, you know I love it.”

She photographed him brushing his teeth, the strange minty paste caught in his beard. On Asgard, such a custom was far too antiquated, but it did serve its purpose. He spat, wiping his face clean on the back of his hand, and out-right refusing to floss. Darcy kept to the edges of the bathroom, out of the mirrors reflection and he thought that wrong in a way, to portray his life as if she wasn’t in it.

She photographed him fixing his coffee and hers (his with cream and a great deal of sugar, hers with more milk than coffee). She snapped picture after picture of him leaning against her counter, mug held in both hands, mouth pursed to blow away the steam. He ate a pop tart while she watched, crumbs caching in his beard and she took photos of that too while he laughed and shook them out onto her floor.

She photographed him watering her plants, the pale pink watering can dwarf in one hand, a cactus shaped coffee cup held in his other. The little-potted fern he’d brought from Asgard reached out for him like a toddler as he passed and he carried it to the nearest shaft of sunlight on the table near the window.

She followed him to Tony’s lab, where she snapped pictures of the pair of them tinkering away over the lab table, static building up in his palms. Tony seemed pleased to be featured not only in his own spread, but Thor’s as well and amicably played up his Mad Scientist persona while Thor fiddled with very tiny screws and soldering pens, Tony’s optic circles perched on the tip of his nose to give him a better view of the small conductive panel he’d offered to investigate.

He thought that would be the end of it, but she was hardly finished. The trip to his previous quarters was made inevitable. Darcy wanted the book - the nursery stories of Norse mythology - for her photoshoot of him. “One more set and I swear I’m done. Normally I’d spread it out over time, except I haven’t had any consistent free time in weeks. But- I have exactly three days before I have to micromanage the caterers and quartets and security and the cleaning staff about the banquet.” She
shoots him finger guns and winks. “Free as fuck, until then.”

“As am I, baring no world-saving necessity,” Thor said, a wry lilt to his voice. “Although I suspect Tony has a few more tasks for me. It would seem he’s taken my advanced knowledge as a challenge and intends to make of me something like a consult.”

“Consult Odinson.” She speaks slowly, parsing out each syllable, melting them into each other like a lover touches another. Thor finds he likes it, likes the way it sounds on her pink tongue. “We might need to make that official.”

“As you please.” Another title, another name. This one though seemed almost indulgent. “Although I doubt it was Stark’s intentions.”

“Don’t let his grumping sway you - he’s stoked to have your help.” Darcy keyed the door open with her own handprint, stepping aside to let Thor enter first. “I’ll get the living room stuff if you want to sort out the bedrooms?”

It was a short task, all things considered, collecting what little Thor had left behind. He grew distracted with the last of it, unpinning photos from the board in the office, lost in the memories behind each picture.

“You made notes,” Darcy interrupted him, standing in the doorway of the office, the Norse Mythology book in hand. She had the soft, pleased sort of smile he’d come to cherish. “This is great. Maybe it’ll help me when I go to Asgard.”

It had been the first of her many gifts to him when he’d come to Earth, and he cherished it greatly. “Aye, I thought to give it back to you, but I’m not yet finished. For everything the Midgardians got right, or even near right, there’s quite more amiss.”

“We try,” she said dryly, cutting across the plush cream carpets to join him near the desk, near the photographs. He moved to hold her, even as she pushed up on her toes, a silent beg for a kiss he wouldn’t deny. Somethings were so impossibly sweet between them, so right and easy. He had only ever seen these moments as a witness, never held such golden time in his own hands. His parents had been that way - all easy glances, and silent conversation. They could tell each other whole stories with nothing but a smile, and a look in their eye.

It was there, in him - he wanted that with Darcy. He would yearn soon, to watch a million stars be
born and burst with her. He would look to find the end of time, and be reborn into the new dawn beside her. He would find himself learning what every smile her mouth could make might mean. He would speak the lover's language, smiles, and looks and he would learn how the sound of laughter could say a thousand different things for only him to understand. He would soon look at her the way his father had looked at his mother. He had known her but for only a few years. He had held her as his own for only days. She was twenty-four to his aeon. She had sixty, perhaps seventy more years and if that should be all he could have of her, he would have it - should she let him. Love, he thought - not the fire but the flower. It was madness, but the capacity for it still laid, nothing but a rosebud, within him. It would grow, petals or thorns, but it would grow.

Of course, he kissed her.

Gentle at first, but Darcy never made gentle easy. Gentle at first and then nipping. Nipping and then biting. He buried his hand in her hair, pulled her head back so that he might kiss her deeper, picked her up, nothing but an arm around her waist, that he might have her closer. She hung like a ragdoll in his arms, toes bumping his knees as she pulled at his hair in turn. This - this was his passion. That every kiss might be a battle they win together. That no touch should send them gently into that good night but make them rage, rage against the dying of the light. That he should take her, fuck her, not beneath any blanket of darkness, but beneath the warmth of every sun, bare for him to see, no shy maiden clutching at her bed clothes, no trembling virgin to take beneath the furs. This was his passion, his creature comfort, comfort creature, a little Midgardian nymphette who bit every kiss into his mouth. This was youth - and if the Stars did bless - he’d feel as such unto his dying breath.

“Oh. Oh, my G--- I am---I should....Go. Except this is my apartment? No - I should go. I’m gonna----”

Darcy disentangled herself from Thor, pushing from his chest with the flat of both hands. He set her down gently, hand cupped around the curve of her waist, something tangible and reassuring. Together they looked at Jane - stunned, wide-eyed Jane, standing in the door of the office. Darcy opened her mouth but closed it with a snap. Without so much as a single word, she pushed her way passed Jane and out the door, leaving Thor awkwardly alone and a little bit hard in the airless, dusty office.

Thor thought to do the same, he really did. He might have, a year ago, or three. Instead, he sighed. Deep, and aggrieved, eyes closed shut. “Hello, Jane.”

Jane made a noise, nothing so much as words, more akin to a squeak. Thor gave her a moment, stared instead at the empty hooks where picture frames had hung. Eventually, she sighed too, faster and sharper than Thor’s weary breath. “You and Darcy.”

“A recent thing,” Thor assured her, having no mind to defend himself further on the subject. He
would not have Darcy’s good name besmirched for a harlot or a homewrecker. “This isn’t how I intended for you to find out.” In truth, he hadn’t given it much thought. He’d thought he had time, still caught in the fresh, turbulent spring of new love. Foolish of him. Time was as fickle as any god, after all. “My apologies.”

“No, I---” She shook her head, wayward locks of hair falling from her braid. She looked as she always did, tired and fair, mouth pursed and eyes wide. “No, it...it makes sense. You two, I mean. I can see how it would make sense.”

He hadn’t expected her to be angry, but the easy acceptance seemed too great a gift. “It does,” he agreed, cautiously. “But as I said - it is new. Only a few days.” Tentative, but not fragile - nothing about Darcy was particularly fragile. Just new.

He watched her shoulders fall softly, not in disappointment but something akin to tension melting. “I’m not...I’m not going to make things hard, Thor. I’m not here to...I don’t want to...” She shook her head, the way she always did when words failed her. “Darcy already hates me so much.”

“Less than you’d think.” None at all, but he could not bring himself to betray Darcy in such a way, not even for Jane. “You are not upset I did not...wait for you?” Foolish to ask. Foolish to wonder at all. And he hadn’t, not until that very moment.

“Maybe a little bit,” Jane admitted, looking away, fiddling with the edge of the cardboard box. “But maybe not as much as I probably should be.” She picked up a picture frame; a photo of the three of them, Darcy and Jane hanging off Thor’s arms, feet dangling over flower speckled grass. “I knew...I knew I couldn’t just come back and pick things up...like before. Not with you, or Darcy.” She touched the glass, tracing their smiles. Thor had Darcy’s bright yellow knitted cap crammed onto his head, and daisies stuck into his beard. “Can I keep this one?”

“Of course.” Thor collected the box into his arms and cleared his throat. “I should find Darcy.”

“Tell her----” Jane frowned, falling silent. “No...No don’t. I should...Do you think I should talk to her?”

“I do not think it is my place to advise,” Thor admitted, gently. “But I think you know Darcy well enough to know what might soothe her broken heart.”

“Yeah,” Jane agreed, in a small voice. “It’s...it’s good to see you, Thor. You look...you look happy.
“If the stars should bless, we would all be as happy as I,” Thor smiled as he spoke, remembering words from his childhood so very long ago. He hesitated, wondering how one went about parting from a past lover. He remembered loving her and wondered when he stopped. Certainly not so long ago. It had only been months - only two. Surely such a thing - such a thing as love - negated formalities. Nothing so simple as goodbye would do. “I’m certain I’ll see you about the tower.”

***

He found Darcy pouting, perched on the bed. She huffed when he entered, looking very much petulant and not at all apologetic even as she spoke. “I’m sorry. I panicked.” The way you sprinted from the room.”

“Yes, I surmised as much given the way you sprinted from the room like a startled gazelle. He swept her up from the bed and into his arms, throwing himself down in her place instead. She squawked, flailing even as he settled, pointy elbows driving into his stomach. With her back against his chest, he wrapped her in his arms and held her still less she managed to hurt herself in such childish rage. He kissed her temple. “Easy does it, Princess. You’ve spoken with her before - I don’t understand the issue.”

“Yes, I’ve spoken to her,” Darcy seethed, caustic and prickly as the acid-mouthed barbed serpents on Vanaheim. She made herself limp in his arms, but it was no victory - only a petty acquiescence. “But never directly after having my tongue in her boyfriend's mouth.”

Ah. Well - he’d have absolutely none of that. He squeezed her until she squeaked, and laughed when she struggled, weakly, faintly, her mouth still pursed into a terrible out. With no warning, Thor hooked one leg over hers, and spun them, pressing her hard against the downy pallet with the full stretch of his body. “Princess,” he said, quiet and firm, mouth pressed to her ear. “Are you not mine? Did you not only yesterday profess that you were mine?”

She humphed at him, turning her cheek away from him. Oh. Thor thought, blood turning hot. Pissy acquiescence was one thing, but she was petulant and the disobedience made his pulse quicken. Like a viper, he snatched up her hair in his fist, yanking her head back as he pushed himself to his knees, her little body still pinned below him. Carefully, mindful of her fragile spine, he placed his hand between her shoulder blades. “Princess,” he murmured, watching her hands clench in the bedclothes. “I asked you a question. Will you answer, or shall I leave you to your anger? Shall I stop?”

She need but only says stop. “I’m yours,” she said, instead, pushing into his hand. “I’m yours.” I’m
“So you are,” Thor agreed, moving his hand lower down her spine, and pulling her head back further. She threw out her hands to hold her weight, but he held her taut. “All things being equal, Princess. I am yours. Not hers - not anyone else's. So long as you give yourself to me, me you shall have in turn.” He released her hair and pushed her back down against the bed. “Do you understand?”

“Yes.” Slowly, she turned her head - her cheek - back to where it had rested against the bed before, and Thor leaned down to kiss the corner of her mouth. “I’m sorry.”

“And I am forgiving,” he said, with a mockingly gracious tone. He was hard, and he let her know, grinding his hips into her backside. “Perhaps you might repent? I would let you.”

“Oh-----Wait, no,” she patted the bed, pushing up against him impertinently and impatiently until he rolled to the mattress and let her up. “Hold that thought!”

He would rather she held him herself. “Not a thought so much as a c---what are you doing?” She was lent over the bedside, riffling in the cabinet. “I have other things to be held than thoughts, Darcy.”

“So, about your photo spread - we did your boring look-I'm-just-like-you stuff. But--- I want to do something different than I did with the others. I want to show what makes you special.” She hopped off the bed, dodging his grabbing hands even as he swatted at her escaping backside, a maroon box tucked under her arm. “Specifically, Prince Thor, but with aspects of Thor, the God of Fertility.”

“And strength,” Thor added, mildly, palming himself just a little bit.

“I haven’t forgotten,” she promised, with a wink. She sat the box at the foot of the bed, prying the lid off with gentle hands. “See?” From the box, she raised a laurel - nay, a crown of branches. Nothing at all like the Roman mythos, but something fiercer, and gilt. “They’re oak, from the oldest tree in New York. Three-hundred and fifty years. I know---I know that’s not very long to you, but...What do you think? It’s---the gold titanium alloy Tony uses for his suit. I had it cast over the branches. The acorns are left over from----look buddy. You gotta say something. Do you like it?”

Did he like it? Dark, gilded branches and sleek feathers folded out from themselves, cresting to form something like Thor’s helmet - but this was very much a crown. The feathers, they were black, almost inky, crystalline. Like mountain crags, they rose up from clusters of spiraling acorns, curling
back like those of his helmet, but with sharp, glittering points. It was a King’s helm, and it pulsed with strength, with life. “Darcy,” Thor said, breathless as he pushed himself up to sit. “It is...truly beautiful. Remarkable. My apologies, I am at a loss for words.”

“So you’ll wear it?”

In truth, Thor felt strangely desperate to wear it. To feel the weight of it, the shape of it. “Aye,” he said, tracing the braided branches with a keen gaze. “Upon this thrown you’ve built for me, Princess, I’ll wear your crown.” A proper Kingdom she seemed intent to give him. “Will you do the honors?”

“Of course! But--not yet. There’s more. Can you--- Will you wear your some of your Asgard pants? Brown leather, if you have it. Barefoot too, please.” She swatted his boot, where it was pressed against the soft, pale furs at the foot of the bed. “Housekeeping already bitches about how hard these are to clean.”

He toed off his boots, letting them clunk against the floor before he lined them up in their tidy row on what he’d claimed as his half of the bed. “I think I have brown leathers in the closet,” he assured her, amusement bleeding into his voice as he watched her scurry about the room, dress swaying around her thighs. “But it’ll be a marvel if I can get them over this.” He cupped his cock, looking for, at the very least, a bit of pity. “Are you certain it can’t be handled prior to more photos.”

Darcy only smirked and tugged him fruitlessly by the hand. “Up. Up. I need to fix the bed. I’ll handle it when we’re done.”

He allowed himself to be manhandled from the pallet and made his way back to the closet. “Are you certain it can wait? Any photographs below the navel will be positively indecent.”

“That’s what I’m hoping for,” Darcy called to him, voice muffled in the linens. “You’re a fertility God, for fuck’s sake. Hurry up! The suns just right.”

“Have you ever worn leather pants?” He abandoned the denim - equally tricky as any of his hide breeches. “Donning them isn’t a quick process, darling.” Indeed - taking them off was worse. Which was possibly why he’d yet to manage it when taking Darcy to bed. Hm. He left them untied, too curious to bother.

Candles, white pillar candles in various sizes, covered every flat surface including a bit of floor, and the edge of the rooted staircase at the food of the frame. They were as of yet, unlit. Across the
mattress, pale curling petals in soft purple and blue peppered the covers, stark against the dark furs. She’d pulled the gossamer curtains from the foot of the bed back to the posters, holding them in place with tassel gold ropes. She’d changed the coverlet from the neutral tan cotton to a rich purple satin damask - reminiscent of a couch his mother had favored, oddly. On the top step of his throne-cum-bed, sat the crown, now decorated with tiny blossoms as well. *A flower crown.*

“I thought about doing red.” Darcy leant against the poster. “But purple is widely acknowledged as a royal color - reserved for nobility. It’s meant to represent power and ambition.”

Thor matched her pose on the other post and cocked his head to the side. “And is that how you see me, Princess?”

“That’s how I see *me,*” she teased, moving forward to push at his chest until he took a seat on the bed. It put them at an almost equal height, were the bed not so raised. “But it’s how the world *should* see you, Prince and God Ready for your crown?”

“I should kneel,” Thor cut her off, staying her hand before she could present the crown. “One must kneel to accept the crown so that they might raise the world with them as they stand again, reborn.” He knelt before her and looked up just faintly into her sea storm eyes. Darcy placed the crown atop his head with steady hands and leaned down just enough to kiss his mouth. She watched him, narrow-eyed, as he returned to the throne, the familiar weight atop his head somehow cathartic for all that he’d never wore this one before.

“It suits you,” she murmured, a hush taking hold as the sun set and left the room pink and orange. “Get comfortable while I light these.”

He could have helped her, but she had not asked for help. She’d asked that he make himself comfortable, and so he did. He reclined against the mountain of plush pillows and watched her work. She was barefoot, and the grey of her dress looked white in the candlelight and Thor thought she looked familiar like this, but could not say how.

When she was finished, she looked at him. “Spread your legs a bit,” she instructed a professional, almost clinical voice. “And bend one knee up a bit.”

Thor did as he was told, keenly aware of his cock dressed to the left and making a prominent show through the tight leather. “This can’t be appropriate.”
“The Avengers brand is a privately owned American-based subsidiary of Stark Industries, as is the website I run these articles on.” Darcy shrugged, but Thor could see her smile behind the camera. “I could a picture of your dick in my ass, and as long as there was some sort of perfunctory legal warning against minors, it’s fine.”

An electrifying thought. Thor cleared his throat and spread his thighs a little farther apart, toes curling into the furs. “It would never fit.”

Darcy laughed. “My ass wouldn’t fit in the article, or your dick wouldn’t fit in my——”

“No, these are very tight leathers.” It was done on Asgard, of course. Usually between men on the battlements when a quim wasn’t readily available or if the warriors simply had a taste for it. Thor wasn’t entirely ignorant to the concept, for all that he hadn’t any practical knowledge. He had his curiosities. Surely though — it would never fit.

“You look good,” she told him, once her laughter had ceased. “You look beautiful.” She knelt against the bed, holding the camera steady in one hand even as she collected petals with the other. Darcy threw them up, letting them rain down in a whirlwind, snapping pictures as Thor caught them in an open hand. He blew it at her, smiling, wondering if the pink in his cheeks would show in the candlelight. “How did we worship all those years ago?”

“On bended knees,” Thor murmured, leaning forward, sitting up even as she knelt on the steps of his throne-bed. She had petals in her hair and fire in her eyes. “Look at you, Princess. Surely I am on the wrong side of your camera.”

From beneath him, she took another picture, candlelight flickering, casting long, narrow shadows across the room. Thor wondered what he looked like, bare-chested and crowned, looking down a the glint of the glass lense. He narrowed his eyes at her when she leaned forward to kiss the top of his foot. “You torture me.”

“Yeah, I’m kind of into it,” Darcy admitted, with a smile.

He pulled his foot away from the she-devil and moved to sit at the end of the bed, feet planted on the highest stair, knees high. “Worshippers brought offerings. What do you bring me, Princess?”

From the bag beside her, she unearthed an apple, shiny red and too big for her palm. “How this? Symbol for knowledge and——”
“Eternal life,” Thor finished for her, taking the apple. He inspected it and found it flawless. “Your Midgardian interpretation most likely comes from the Apples of Iðunn. A Goddess who may grant immortality with a bite of her Golden Apples.”

“Or it came from the Greek mythos of Hesperides Golden Apples,” Darcy argued, rising to stand as Thor threw himself down across the pallet, and bit into the apple, crown, and hair askew. The skin breaking was that akin to a bone breaking, loud and jarring in the quiet of the room. ‘Titan Atlas’ daughters, the Hesperides. They guarded the Goddess’ Hera’s garden, specifically her Golden Apple Tree, a gift from Gaia- Earth, herself.”

Thor hummed. Greek Mythos. His knowledge of their lore was limited. “Perhaps their stories came from ours. We are older. Iðunn’s apples were golden as well, and grown in a garden protected by a dragon.”

“No - that’s the Greek story. The Eternal Dragon Ladon,” Darcy laughed, kneeling at the bedside to take another photo of his profile. “He never slept and had one-hundred heads.”

He waited until she’d snapped her picture to turn to her, swallowing the second bite. “Vængr, who had one-hundred wings sprouted up from his back. He bit his own tail to create an ouroboros around Iðunn’s garden, that none might enter without his permission. Perhaps Gaia stole the idea for herself. Indeed - her apples could be Iðunn’s. Long ago, she gifted them with a far lighter hand. Until the Discords.”

“The Apples of Discord is a Greek legend too!” She laughed, even through her outrage, and moved a strand of Thor’s hair out of Thor’s face, fingertips dragging ever so gently along his temple. “It began the Trojan War, so the myth goes.”

He turned to his side, propping his head in one hand, and holding the apple in the other. “Your Trojan War was thousands of years after the Discords of Vanaheim. History is cyclical. There are tales of Thor before I was born, did you know? Loki too. From my seed, the next reign of Odin might begin. The histories... They come and go as the tides do. We know them, and we forget them as we burn out into the cosmos to be made whole again in new stars.”

“You are a star,” Darcy murmured, kneeling on the bed to hold her camera over him and capture him at a new angle.

He captured the hem of his dress in the clutch of his dress and dragged it over his stomach as he fell
onto his back once more. “We shall all be stars, one day, in the Kingdom of Valhalla.”

“Valhalla is for heroes.” She pulled her dress from his loose grip. “Stop that, I shouldn’t be in the frame.”

“Show no life of mine, where you are not in it.” He reached for her once more, palming the back of his left thigh and tugging her closer. “Come here.”

She did, sliding one leg over his both so that she was seated in his lap. She took another picture from her vantage point, and Thor tucked both his arms behind his head. “Tell me more about Valhalla.”

“There are two Kingdoms Beyond,” Thor told her, letting his lashes close. “Valhalla, who is ruled over by the Valkyrie, and Fólkvangr, blessed by the Mother Freya.”

“Yes?”

Perhaps.” His mother would serve well as the All-Mother, who loved her children so well, she died for them, that they might be reborn brand new from the womb of Fólkvangr with her blessing. “She was named for Freya, Mother of All. She died honoring her precepts - a mother sacrifice. Valhalla is a Kingdom, but Fólkvangr is a paradise.”

“How do you know you’ll go to Valhalla?”

“It is where Gods go to be reborn a God again. From Fólkvangr, you are born anew - perhaps a New God, perhaps not.” Thor opened his eyes and found her looking at him with both her own and not through her camera lens. “Forever, I shall be a God, Princesa. When I pass beyond the Gates, my fate remains. I will be born again, Thor. I have been the God of Lightning before, the God of Strength.” He smiled, remembering the golden thread, split into three. “There was no history of Thor, God of Fertility. I cannot say what path the Stars will guide me on next.”

“I can’t imagine any world without a Thor.”

He touched her thighs, pushing up the hem of her dress and smiled when she followed the path of his fingertips with her lense. “Show no life of mine, where you are not in it,” he said again. “There is a story of the Stars, told in the City of Dreamers. That is the realm of Álfheimr, my mother’s home. The Light Elves - Ljósálfheimr, they say when we are undone by the cosmos - the true Death before Rebirth...that we are scattered across the Black Sea in the Sky. Stardust. There is never more or less than there ever has been. We are all made of the same mix.”
She let him smooth his palms up the inside of her thighs, baring her pale skin, a stark contrast to his own tan stomach “Like the rules of thermodynamics. Energy cannot be created or destroyed. When we die - our energy remains and becomes something else.”

“Yes. It is not something contained in one simple religion or belief. We are---energy, as you put. Regardless of what you believe, or don’t.” He swept his thumb over her inner thigh, pressing into the give there. “The Ljósálfheimr believed sometimes when you came together to be reborn, you came back changed. That you lost a bit of your own stardust and gained that of another. That occasionally what came back from the Black Sea in the Sky were shared souls - soulmates.”

Her mouth curled into a sweet, dimpled smile. “And do you believe the Ljósálfheimr?”

“I didn’t, for a long time. If we are all of the same mixes, then we all share soul space.” It had made so much sense to him, before. What did it matter if your soul touched another when you were scattered and without physical form? He thought he understood differently now. “But it is one thing touch another soul, and another thing entirely to bring it back within you. The Ljósálfheimr said - you would never know until you met a soul that fit against yours. Kismet, or synergy perhaps. Someone who fills a void you weren’t aware of until they healed it.” He rolled his hips up against her, feeling tender in two different ways. “Are you finished with your photographs, Princess?”

She took one more picture, their hands tangled where he held hers against his stomach, between her thighs. “I suppose I am.”

Chapter End Notes

Lots of lore in this! The Green Mythology is fairly correct. The Norse mythology is a mix of made up and correct.

I would LOVE to hear from you guys your favorite line or moment in the story. From this chapter, from any chapter. What's the one moment in Temple Heart that stands out the most to you?

Credit to Dylan Thomas for the rage against the dying of the light. There's a second part to that poem I'll be using later.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

You wanted a six thousand word update, right? Because I'M HERE TO MAKE YOUR DAY.

did y'all see that the chapters went from 15 to TWENTY-FIVE.

Pack your bags, we're going to ASGARD VerY sOoOOOOOOoooon.

I have had this chapter planned for a LONG time, and I am very pleased by how it came out - but the next chapter will be fun too. Huzzah.

The photos surfaced the day before the Ambassadors Banquet. Thor only saw a single picture from Darcy’s spread, though he’d been assured there were many. The cover photo, Darcy explained, a bold-faced font decreeing And The Gods Above floating over his head. He only saw the one because Stark had it pulled up on the holoscreen, spanning the better length and height of the far wall in his lab. It was Thor, of course, spread out on his back, one arm tucked behind his head, and the other holding the bitten apple laying against his chest. His crown was askew, hair falling in a wild tumble over his shoulders and across the bedclothes. The candlelight cast shadows over his face, and paint him in warm earthy golds and oranges. No smile on his face, but his mouth was open, head tipped back in pristine pleasure, eyes narrowed, but bright. It makes his stomach clench to see such a moment captured in perfect color.

It was a compelling picture. Thor thought he looked particularly strong, virile even, with his biceps flexed, and stomach taught, the golden curls of his beard made darker by the dusk hour. But he was not what was so compelling, laid out bare beneath a camera lens. For all that he was the focus, it was she who’d stolen the frame, a beautiful faceless mystery. Darcy’s dress was pooled between her legs in a twist of soft fabric, just below Thor’s navel. Her pale thighs framed his waist, and she had a single palm splayed over his stomach, painted nails biting ever so gently into his skin, a perfect shade of red to match his apple.

“I don’t care what you’re the God of,” Tony’s eyes were comically huge, magnified by the loops and circle of his glasses. He narrowed his gaze, pointing at Thor with something potentially pointy and possibly flame-throwing. “That’s my informally adopted daughter and annoyingly reluctant heir to the Stark legacy. And you’re fucking her all over the internet.”

He was. He’d been as deep inside her as she could take, hadn’t even noticed she’d still held her camera. Thor grinned, paying no mind to Tony’s threatening stance. “And was it not Darcy’s intention to follow each of us, The Avengers, through our normal daily lives?” He shrugged, tilting his head toward the picture. “That is my ideal way to end any day. Are you upset you did not think
to finish your photoshoot in the same manner? I know you to be a man of particularly carnal nature.”

Tony’s shoulders fell, and his scowl intensified. “You’re gross and I hate you.”

“No need for animosity, friend Stark. Perhaps next time.” Thor clapped him heartily on the back, quelling his laugh at Tony’s slight stumble. “Does your vanity not stretch so far as to include pride in your wildly beautiful and ambitious child whose visage and intellect are far and wide enough to enamor Gods and Princes alike?”

“Flattery can fuck off.”

“Perhaps I could call you Father?”

“You’re such a dick, like I can sort of relate to why Loki thought you were a dick now, really I can.” Tony frowned into his own neatly trimmed beard, a pout of Thor had ever seen one. For all that they were not hewn from the same blood or stone, he and Darcy were very much alike.

“Tony,” Thor said, smiling for all that he was serious. “I am Thor Odinson, Prince to the Throne of Asgard. I will be King of Kings, and God of Gods - across the cosmos. And I find myself compelled to kiss the soles of her feet, and pray that wildflowers should blossom in the wake of her every step. My will is to worship her, above and beyond.”


***

“Hey, so I wasn’t sure what you’d want to wear to this thing? Like a suit and shit? Tony sent your new measurements in for something to be made. It’s in the closet.” Darcy peeked out of the kitchen, as Thor slipped in through the front door. “Or do you want to wear something Asgardian? You’re on the manifest as an Interplanetary Ambassador, so that would be fine too.”

“Tony’s suit will surely serve. My Asgardian ceremonial attire would be considered ostentatious in comparison, I think.” He had such a thing, packed with care from one such return from Asgard, last year perhaps. The black mangle with the redlined cape and the fine, moleskin breeks in storm grey. Softer armor, more for display than actual battle (although sturdy in its own right), and the black leather vambraces with the acorn buckles his mother had given him when he’d been crowned Heir. It
would look well with his new crown, truthfully. It should fit too, as Asgardian wear was made to grow. “Midgardian attire is fine.”

Darcy’s gaze turned speculative, as she joined him in the sitting room, two oversized, steaming mugs in hand. “T’challa is going to show up wearing a necklace made of actual teeth and a crown made from the skull of a panther passed down for generations. Possibly the panther of the Black Panthers of Wakanda. Most of the representatives will wear something that defines their culture and customs. You should wear your Asgardian stuff.”

And so he would if she so insisted. “What will you wear?”

“Something custom, too.” She winked and pursed her mouth to blow at the lingering steam. “Hey—tomorrow’s the Spring Equinox on Earth. Do you want to celebrate as you do on Asgard?”

“Eat a heart before all of New York?” It made his stomach clench, just the very thought of it. “I’m not sure they’re ready for such a thing.”

“Yeah, baby steps are probably necessary to get to sacrificial organ feasts.” She hummed and nestled in beside him on the squashy purple couch. “Well. Maybe we can have a little celebration together, then.”

“There are certain aspects I would enjoy celebrating with you in particular,” Thor assured her, smiling down at her head on his shoulder. “Indeed - I wonder if the Midgardian Spring Equinox will affect me as the Asgardian Spring Solstice does. I confess genuine curiosity, as they are both the coming of Spring, but an Equinox and a Solstice are entirely opposite.”

“And how does the Asgardian one affect you?”

A shiver ran through him at the very thought of what it might be like to fall into bed with Darcy, emboldened by the Spirit Mother of Spring. “It makes me want.”

“I don’t think any specific celestial spatial alignment of planets and suns can possibly make you want any more than you already do. If your dick didn’t seem to have some kind of magical godly voodoo on it, I don’t think I could take you at all - let alone more.”

Thor played with one of her girls, dragging the looping tip over the bare expanse of her freckled arm. “Your body can take me because it was made to do so. We align as the planets do.”
“Hey now,” Darcy shivered, but she did not move away from his soft touch. “I was born long before I even knew you existed, buddy.”

“True, but I was born long before you.” He dropped her curl and traced his fingertips up the curve of her neck instead. “Perhaps I was made to wait for you - eons between us, that I might grow to be good for you. Perhaps you were re born to fit me. It matters not to me how, only that you are truly made in my honor, in my blessing. Nothing -no one- has ever fit me so well. And so I am certain you are special and meant for me. It is my will to deserve such a gift.”

She pressed her face into his chest, careful not to spill her tea. “You’re making me blush.”

Gently, Thor tipped her head back and touched her pink stained cheek. “I know.”

***

She wore the bastards cloak. Thor had never hated and loved a garment more. The sentient cascade of celestial satin hugged her body like it was painted it on, glittering with her every move in a dazzling sparkle like stars in the sky. Not black, not blue, not purple. None and all at once. Had it made itself strapless or had she summoned such with a thought? Truly nothing short of magic could have held it in place so, clinging to her from breast to hips, dripping down to the floor like an inky oil spill, fanning out across the marble tiles in ripples and waves, a black hole marvel, a colorless nova. She looked like a Goddess of the Night Sky, as an All-Mother, holding the cosmos in her arms. It matched him well, in his somber formal wear, shined to a proud, gleaming polish. He had worn his crown, hair pulled back at the temples in small, flat braids.

Darcy too wore a crown - a diadem to be sure - small and delicate, sitting lightly atop her loose curls. It matched his in color and style, the band made of thin oak branches braided threefold, with a single feather on the left side over her ear, nestled in a curl of acorns. She touched it gently, with a hesitant hand. “Tony gave it to me. Do you like it?”

“I wish I’d have thought to gift you one myself,” Thor said honestly, feeling suddenly emotional. “Every princess needs her crown.”

“It isn’t a crown---it’s a headband ,” Darcy protested, as was her wont to do. “It’s just a headband.”

“My mother always preferred a diadem as well. Heavy is the head that wears the crown, and all that.
She was far too practical.” He touched the crystalline feather and found it it’s edge to be as sharp as any knife. “She’d have loved this.” He did wonder, what his Goddess Mother Freya thought, as she smiled down upon him. But he knew, too. “She’d have loved you.”

***

Darcy’s banquet was an affair on par with that of Asgardian Celebration, Thor could attest. Stark had spared no expenses, as was his wont to do. High along the walls were expansive holo screens, bigger than Thor had yet to see on Earth. Long tables, stretching far across the hall, were laden with crisp linens in creams and golds. Atop them were the Midgardians beloved fine glassware and many numbered forks and spoons. Candles glimmered in gilt sconces, and tall vases stood proud, the first blooms of the season rising from the clear water, pale petals in muted pastel purples.

“Hellebore,” Banner said from his seat beside Thor at the long table. The seat to his other side was Darcy’s and remained yet vacant. “And hosta, the green, and white leaves.”

Thor picked up a fallen petal from the table and laid it on Darcy’s napkin where it curled itself into a perfect heart. “I know of Hellebore. When last I came to Midgard, they were thought to be a magical blossom. They bloomed in the cold, you see, and such things harkened a bountiful year. I am something like a patron of Gods of Husbandry, and so these flowers were sometimes brought to me as an early homage. Well...not to me specifically, but to the God of Coming Spring which is sometimes me, but not by name.”

Banner hummed, as he did when curious. “Does Darcy know that?”

“There is nothing to say she doesn’t,” Thor considered, feeling curious himself. Hellebore was a strange choice, abundant yes in the colder months but Midgardian technology offered a number of off-season blooms. “Except that there should be no lore for it, as they were not laid at the feet of Thor, but simply to the beckoning of spring. Perhaps she chose it simply as a homage to spring. It's an interesting choice.

“Interesting, yes.” Banner hummed again. “The Helleborus genus is actually quite poisonous. It can cause cardiac arrest, and even burns if mishandled.” He laughed, suddenly, a quiet sound that suited him. “Perhaps it isn’t so surprising a choice for Ms.Lewis.”

Thor didn’t understand the correlation, but then where the enigmatic Dr. Banner was concerned, that was not unusual. “You think so?”
Dr. Banner nodded faintly, gaze far left and beyond Thor. “She’s very beautiful, isn’t she? Beautiful and dangerous. The darker parts of the world would do well to remember that. Remember what this banquet of hers is about.” He waved his hand lightly, to the slowly filling tables and chairs.

Beautiful and dangerous; Thor agreed. He looked at the vases, at the artfully collected flowers there. “The poisons’ not in the petals,” he concluded, calling to the life in the hearty flower. Indeed, the blossom stood tall on its delicate spine, assured that it could defend itself. “It’s in the roots.”

“Ah,” Dr. Banner laughed again, just a soft little chuff. “True. But I think the danger’s still in the petals.”

***

She’d been right; Thor’s ceremonial attire did not stand out. There were proper Midgardian suits, but leathers and metal plated armor and gowns of feathers and beads all alike. There were painted faces, and hair stiffened with quicklime. Necks dripping in glittering diamonds, and necks laden in sun-bleached bones. Polished shoes, and bare feet. The people of Darcy’s contingent had truly come as they were. There was even a woman Thor suspected to be a priestess, that wore nothing but a sheer shift, the whole of her body exposed but painted in a shade of red that could only be blood.

By the time Darcy joined him at the table - the Avengers Table to be sure, on a raised dais at the head of the room - servants in smart white tuxes had already begun to bring forth the dishes. Gleaming covered platters in fine silver filigree were held aloft and presented.

Darcy slid into her appointed chair - pulled out by another besuited servant. “I’m so sorry. Last minute stuff. I didn’t realize how long it would take to----”

Thor caught her by the elbow, raising her hand palm up. “Are you hurt?” A splash of red stood out in crisp contrast against the alabaster skin of her inner wrist.

She pulled her hand away - not without a little fight - and hid it in her lap. “It isn’t mine,” she promised in a hush. “It’s--- Well. You’ll see.” Servants moved in graceful circles, setting platters before them - large and small and in-between. Darcy cleared her throat and straightened her shoulders. “Smile pretty, Rainbow Sparkle. We’re going live.”

Thor only had a moment to mutter “What?” before the holo-screens were alive with the perfect image of Darcy’s grinning face and a great deal of Thor’s shoulder.
“Hello,” she said, in a calm clear voice that ran from hidden speaks about the hall. “Welcome to the first annual Avengers Ambassador Banquet. As you all should know by now - I’m Darcy Lewis - the Ambassador of Ambassadors, if you will.” The crowd laughed lightly, as the cameras panned across the sea of keen-eyed, smiling faces. It settled on Stark, the forefront of the Avengers table, leaning back like any king or proud father. “We’re here today as Peacekeepers. We’re here today for our countries, our kingdoms, our villages, and families. Some of you came here to New York, having never left your village before. Some of you came here to New York from other planets entirely.”

She tipped her head to Thor. “But we’re here now, united. We are here, now together, to show the world what Unity could mean. The last few weeks you’ve trained among the best - you’ve trained among each other. This liaison, this workshop, this retreat - call it whatever you want...This was always about learning what the world could be like if we set aside our differences and embraced each other. Before you are ceremonial or sacred dishes from the very people that join us here tonight, prepared to be shared. Step out of your comfort zone - be brave. Under your plates, you’ll find cards with prayers or chants or just words of wisdom. I invite you to speak them as if they were your own. Embrace them. Honor your own culture, but welcome others.” She took a platter and pulled it close, with a wry half-smile on her face. “When you leave here - you can go anywhere. You can go home - or you can take what you’ve learned and run wild with it. I’ve chosen the latter. I’ve been elected by the Prince of Asgard, a place many of you still deny exists, to represent Earth on their Council of Nine Realms. And to honor that, I present the Asgardian prayer for the coming Spring.”

Thor smelled it before he saw it. The tang of copper and salt, so familiar. A little heart, in a pool of blood, sat in a small ceramic dish. Thor wondered if it was still warm, and thought surely it must be if Darcy’s hands were already dashed in blood. To think that she had harvested it herself, had carved open some little beasty - a rabbit, he thought - Thor could hardly breathe. Darcy pushed up from the table, chair scraping before the servants could rush forward and pull it away more quietly. “I honor the Gods of Asgard with a prayer told to me by the God of Fertility and Prince of the Kingdom Above Us, who summons the Spring for all the cosmos.” Thor felt a chill bite at his bones, as he looked up at her perfect profile, her raised chin and squared shoulders. All cameras held her, backlit in soft candlelight. She picked up the heart and held it in her palm. “I water this land with the blood of this beast, born on this soil like it’s mother before. Such is life, and the circle of it.” Her voice, quiet but firm, carried even without the aid of speakers and such. Blood, bright and beautiful, dripped and stained the cream tablecloth. “Hear us, and be welcome, the coming of Spring!”

She ate it. Then and there as hundred of eyes - thousands of eyes - watched her. She bit into it, severed the soft tendons. It did not give easily, but she held it tightly, blood gushing down her wrist, and tore it free. It stained her chin, and throat and Thor was perfect, horribly, heatedly struck as he watched her throat work around that one perfect bite.

He wished he could feel it as she had. He wished he could know it, besides her where he sat. The give and snap of flesh beneath her teeth, the first burst of flavor on her tongue, the way it filled her mouth, caressed her throat. He wanted to know it, as she did.

She smiled, bloody-toothed and shameless. “You’re scared,” and Thor was. Terrified of his own beating heart, and the one that beat beneath it. He could feel her, like a thousand hundred fluttering...
bird wings, the faith of a thousand songs sung in harmony by a single voice. Dangerous and beautiful - Darcy was. “There’s nothing more frightening than the fear of the unknown. Those that would stop us - they fear us because they don’t know what we’re capable of. And they should be afraid. We are the Peacekeepers and we are afraid, but we won’t stop. We’re here tonight to march bravely on, in the face of fear. Be afraid...but never stop.”

“Yibambe,” James Barnes said after a staggering silence, and as the camera panned to him, Thor felt Darcy breathe, shoulders sinking in relief ever so slightly. Barnes did not smile, but raised his right hand into a fist and pressed it to the left of his chest - the Wakanda symbol of brotherhood and the holo screens held him in sharp relief across the walls, a dark wolf cast against the snow. Thor liked him all the more for it. “Yibambe amandla.”

Prince T’Challa returned the gesture, pushing up from his chair to stand. As Darcy had promised, he wore a skull crown and beside him. His sister Suri stood too, dressed finely but with a crown made of thick, thorns and jagged teeth. “Yibambe amandla,” T’Challa and Suri called in unison. “Hold fast, our brother.”

“A Norwegian prayer.” Jane stood, in a gown of deep green, and cleared her throat. When she spoke, her voice shook, and her gaze held Darcy’s. “Eastrea, the Goddess of the Coming Sun, vær så snill å tilgi meg.”

Darcy stared at her hard, mouth curling at the corners in a small, beautiful smile. Jane returned it and Thor thought - that was as good a spring bloom as any.

It was enough, it would seem. The gentle of scraping of plates filled the quiet of the hall as the Peacekeepers moved to collect the cards beneath their plates. Thor listened to them all, a soft chatter, as the Allspeak translated them. Peace prayers, words of hope, blessings of the Sun God, chants to put the Season of Death to sleep. Darcy did not sit, but turned to him and held the remaining half of her heart to him.

“Share with me,” she said, with bloody lips, and Thor welcomed it to his mouth from her fingertips.

A tender heart and Thor thought that fitting for the way he felt in the moment. “Hear us Spring Mother, the season of my birth,” he said, very quietly, as Darcy cupped his face in her bloody palm. He would finish the blessing, in her honor. “The cry of your child, far from the Kingdom of the Gods. Be welcome in this new Kingdom, to the heart of the Earth Mother, who welcomes you into her arms. Humble us, Spring Mother, on the succor of your breast, that these trees may grow tall, and these fruits may grow fat, and every wanted babe in the womb be born healthy and hale. As the moon rises on this night, let this shared heart, and our shared bodies be hommage on your altar beneath the same stars. Come tomorrow,” he said, voice breaking roughly, “come tomorrow, the
coming of the Spring on Midgard, may it be more plentiful than all before. So it is I call, so shall it be.”

He kissed her palm and watched her in awestruck silence as she sat, bloody-faced and smiling, beside him. “That went well, right? I wasn’t sure I wouldn’t choke or---”

Thor kissed her. Roughly, and wildly and for all the world to see as he was certain they were making a show on the holo screens above given the sudden and cheerful whistles and bellows. He came away, bloody-mouthed with his hands buried in her hair and his forehead pressed to hers. “Your star is my star,” Thor said, a little brokenly. “On Asgard, that is how we say---”

But Darcy needn’t an All Speak to understand him, and she finished his words as if they were her own.

“I love you.”

***

He wanted to taste the blood from her mouth again, lick at her hurt, eat it up and pour back into her every sweet sensation the blind black cosmos could offer. Instead - they danced.

Mostly, Darcy danced. With a great many numbers of people who would have their slice of her time. Thor regarded them with a heavy brow and a frown but Darcy only laughed and leaned up for a kiss between each attempted suitor.

Tony met him at the edge of the ballroom after his own dance with Darcy. “She signed the papers.” He drank deeply from the long-stemmed glass of crisp, pale wine. “In accordance to all laws as dictated by New York, and by the power vested in a man named Chief Justice Chad of the greater Manhattan Courthouse- Darcy Lewis is now known formally as Darcy Lewis-Stark, sole inheritor of the Stark Legacy, and including the whole of the Avengers Initiative, and power of attorney over myself in the event I should be rendered incapable of answering on my own behalf or maybe I manage to scrape up enough karma and live to be really, really inconveniently old.” He sighed, gently, and rocked on his heels. “Please bring her back, okay?”

“Heimdall will be instructed to accept her request for return whenever she wishes,” Thor promised, knowing even as he spoke that Heimdall would do as Thor wished. “And in the event that she is in danger - she need but call to him, and he will answer. By the powers of the Nine Realms, she will return home.”
Tony turned to him, looking up at Thor in a way he typically avoided. “Do you know the stupidest thing?” Thor did not answer, having long since learned Midgards love for rhetoric. “I can’t think of a better fucking person to go represent our fucking planet. I can’t think of a single person on this entire floating rock - dead or alive - that would come into something so fucking prolific as representing literally every person on Earth ... without a single God damned selfish intention in her whole body.”

“I did not make the decision blindly,” Thor said mildly, but he understood the nature of Tony’s words. “She’d have been welcomed into the Kingdom as my friend.” Well. Tolerated, perhaps. Loki, even wearing the face of their father, would not have pushed at Thor to harshly. “She’d have been welcomed with revelry as my paramour.” At the very least, by the council. “But for this - my word is not enough. She will be tested, and she will succeed on her own merits.”

“Does she know she’ll be tested?”

“Nay.” Thor had considered telling her, but he thought the trouble it would cause would do no good. “Given her intelligence and propensity for political and quick thinking, it is like that she will not even notice.”

Darcy squeezed her way between them only a moment later, bright-eyed and still bloody-faced. “Can you please wash that off? It’s grossing me out,” Tony griped, but Thor found it rather...enticing.

“I made an offering to Thor in front of thousands of people, Tony. I ate a heart. I told people to suck it up and be brave. I can’t wash it off, it’s probably like reneging.”

It was in a way. To wash away the blood was to welcome shame in the act of paying homage. He hadn’t told Darcy as much. He hadn’t told Darcy much at all, in regards to the summoning of Spring. But something in her seemed to know, and that called to him.

“It wasn’t to Thor.” Tony scoffed. “Thor isn’t the Spring Mother, or whatever.”

“Don’t say or whatever. You only do that when you don’t want to understand something. He’s a Fertility God, Tony. He speaks for her,” Darcy argued, as was her wont to do in all things, forever and always. “And even if he didn’t...I don’t pray to anyone else, Tony. I never said Spring Mother. He did. But I prayed to him, and he knows it.”

“There is a limit to my patience, Princess,” Thor cut in, as lightly as he could manage. In truth - her
declarations ricocheted in the marrow of his bones, made sweeter by the blood on the lips with which she spoke them. The vehemence in which she protected her actions...a true disciple of He, surely.

“Is there like...is there legitimately a dead rabbit just hanging out somewhere in the tower right now? Did you stab a little bunny rabbit in my kitchen? Holy shit. Was it dead when you cut---oh God. I can’t even finish that sentence. You’re both fucked up.” Tony paused. “It was dead already, right?”

“No, it wasn’t.” Darcy blinked at him, expression awash in perfect placidity. “And it wasn’t in the kitchen. I went down to the courtyards. I had to do it over dirt.” She looked over at Thor, brow furrowed. “Right? Like...over the Earth.”

She could have made offerings of bread and honey, and if her heart was just, it would be as well received. She needn’t have made any offer at all. Thor did not say this. “It is as I have done. A fresh kill, over the soil. Water the lands in the blood of the beast, who was born to the soil like it’s mother before him. Such is life, and the circle of it.”

“You worship your way, and I’ll worship mine;” she told Tony, but she touched his arm too, a gentle press and Tony nodded his easy acceptance in a way he’d do for no one else. “But don’t play dumb to me, okay? No whatever. Thor is a God - you believe that right? After everything you’ve seen, Tony. You know he’s more than just...an Alien. There’s no such thing as Aliens. Only something bigger than us. You know that, right? Thor’s a God.”

There was no hesitation in the pause, only true Stark consideration. Thor considered it a gift, to find himself under such gaze. “Yes,” Tony said, concisely. “He is what he is.”

She kissed his cheek, blood too dry to transfer, but it was still to Tony’s credit that he allowed it. “You don’t have to worship like I do to believe.”

“Well, I would hope not.” Tony paused again, mouth still pulled into a frown. “Just don’t believe so hard you don’t come back down to Earth.”

Darcy snorted inelegantly, a juxtaposition to her fine attire. “That’s why I’m gassing up the God Squad down here.”

“The article?” And Thor thought Tony looked far more speculative when first Darcy’s photographs were published. “I guess if you’re trying to buy the millennial vote, Sex God is a good way to go. Smart move, Baby Stark. What’s next?”
“I asked Thor to bless the season while hundreds of thousands of people watch via the live feed. What comes after that - well. That’s up to Thor.” Darcy shrugged and turned her gaze to meet him. “Was my offering good or whatever?”

“Or whatever,” Tony scoffed, under his breath and into his beard.

Thor had heard ten thousand prayers and more had stood at too many an altar, had eaten the fruits, and smelled the flowers and bedded the women. Never in all his years had he been so awestruck by a single supplicant. “Aye. But there is the second step to a proper summoning of Spring, on my planet. Of which I would request your help.”

“Oh?” Darcy smirked, having some notion of Thor’s intentions. In truth- she could never know, for Thor scarcely knew what he wanted of her tonight. The call of Spring bloomed brightly in his veins, the good season calling him to bless it rightly. *Soon*.

“Gross,” Tony chimed in, cheerfully. “But still a celebration I can get behind. I’ll have to see if Pepper wants to summon the Spring stuff with me.”

Thor felt for the first time that he had, in a sense, Tony’s blessing where it came to Darcy. An archaic thing to desire, but then - what was Thor if not somewhat archaic?

He had only just turned to speak with Darcy when a pair of men approached them, dressed in tidy, matching black tuxedos. “Ms.Lewis,” the shorter of the two said, not laden with a camera, but a pen and pad instead.

Tony cleared his throat and leaned forward ever so slightly. “That’s Ms.Lewis-Stark. Formal adoption went through this morning, boys. You’re looking at the heiress of the Stark Legacy and Avengers Initiative.”

Thor cleared his throat too and did his best to tower over the whole lot of them. “And in the interest of title, it’s Darcy Lewis-Stark, Heiress to the Stark Legacy, Avengers Initiative, Avengers Chief Ambassador and Midgardian Representative for the Council of Nine Realms in the Kingdom of Asgard.”

Darcy smiled benignly. “You both just plan on telling everyone who stands still long enough, don’t you?”
“Yes,” Tony said, even as Thor protested their importance. “You have earned your place, wherever you be. Such should be known.”

“Ms. Lewis is fine, for now. Mr. Mathis, correct?” Darcy turned her placid smile back to the men. “Mr. Opeal.”

“We’ve followed your Peacekeeper work from the beginning, Ms. Lewis. I’m a big fan of what you’re doing here,” Mr. Matthis explained, notepad held aloft. “But we’re interested in your side project.”

Darcy shook her head minutely, brow raised and mouth spread in a smile. “I have no side projects.”

“Your articles,” he explained. “On the Avengers.”

“They’re not side projects,” Darcy argued, mildly. “I am Chief Ambassador of the Avengers if you will recall. The articles are as much a part as my peacekeeping as mucking through deforested backhoe trenches in the Amazon. I’m not sure I’m following your point here.”

“Care to clear up the miscommunication? They seem like...fluff pieces, almost. Except for your latest,” Mr. Mathis gaze skittered to Thor’s, ever so briefly. Thor simply continued to tower. “That seemed more like propaganda.”

Darcy’s smile spread wide across her face, and something devilish flashed across Tony’s to match. “Did it?” She asked, giving the man no time to reply. “My apologies if my attempts to humanize people often put on a pedestal for spending their every waking hour fighting to keep humanity safe. Not America, not Russia, not New York City - but society as a whole. What you see as fluff pieces...I see as something empowering for everyday people. We all are heroes, we all are ordinary people. The capacity for good isn’t anything super or special. To be good, and do good...all you need is a little bravery. And that’s in us all, every single one of us. They are superheroes, yes. And it’s easy to raise them up and tear them down as need be - if we forget that they’re human too. Every single one of them, this I won’t argue. They are human.” She moved into Thor’s space, and it was a habit to slide an arm around her small waist and pull her closer. She touched his chest. “Except for Thor. He isn’t human. And so his article was different.”

Mr. Mathis to her words in stride, his face nothing but thoughtful as his man held the camera steady on Darcy’s face. “And if the others were meant to empower everyday people that they can be heroes too...what was Thor’s article for?”
“We all need something to believe in,” Darcy said simply. “Everything we need to heal the world is right in front of us. Human, hero, and God alike.”

“You truly believe he’s a God?” Mr. Mathis asked, and Thor thought - Thor thought there was something like hope in his voice. Something like want.

“I do,” Tony cut in, and Darcy did not quite quell the sharp shock of breath that escaped her. Thor understood. Tony was known for being a very smart man, held in high esteem by a large part of the world. Not a God, per say, but he had his own followers. His belief held weight, and Thor felt it, ever so, beneath his own heart. He truly did believe. “How hard is it to believe in a God standing right in front of you, when we’ve spent how long believing in one who hides in the sky and left nothing but a book of he-said, she-said? Believe in whatever Gods you want...but I’ve seen the other side of the sky; I fell through a black hole. I know. I’ve felt it. Thor’s the real deal.”

“It’s a lot to ask people to believe when we’ve seen so much,” Mr. Mathis argued. “We’ve seen what humans are capable of. Of how they’re changing.”

“You want proof, Mr. Mathis? The conventional Christian God,” Darcy began, “asked that we simply believe. That the essence of faith as belief without proof. But at the end of the day - Thor could cram proof down your throat, and it would be up to you to believe. Humans are capable of so much. All you have to do is believe it. You want proof?”

“Tomorrow,” Thor cut in gently. “Tomorrow, Spring will rise to my call and a New Age of Earth will be born in my Name. I am Thor the Thrice Touched, God of Lightning, God of Strength, and God of Fertility. Look for it, Mr. Mathis. I am no good to ask for faith blindly. I will show you my path. For those who believe in me tonight, will find themselves blessed come morning. You will see it, and you will know - I am Thor, who will sit the throne in the Kingdom in the Sky and bring peace and prosperity to Midgard, to Earth, should they believe me capable.”
Bucky says "hold fast" and T'Challa and Suri return it in a more formal way, I think.

what jane says is actually "please forgive me"
“If that’s all, Mr. Mathis?” Darcy said, in her perfectly conversational voice, maintaining her peaceable eye contact with the journalist. “Jarvis, open windows 63-27, and 43-32.”

Thor did not hear Jarvis overhead, but across the hall, one of the high glass windows sunk smoothly into the floor. The revelers gasped in echoing unison, scrambling away from the window as a sharp, cool breeze rushed in like reaching water.

Tony made some small noise about Jarvis being keyed into Darcy’s voice for command. “Why are we opening the windows?”

“Pre-emptive damage control and a fashionable exit,” she explained, without explaining much at all. “Carry me?”

“Aye,” Thor agreed, catching her meaning and holding his hand high to catch Mjölnir too. The ring of it blended prettily with the quartet of string players, and he caught the hammer easily in one hand. “Forgive us our early departure, but we have a season to call upon.” He pulled Darcy back against his chest. “May the skies bless you with the rains of change, my friends.”

He did not wait to hear their parting greeting, simply spun the hammer overhead and let himself be pulled into the winds. The high ceilings offered a perfect view of their compatriots, all dressed in their finest, but Thor had no eyes for anything, not Darcy or the darkening skies. Higher and higher he carried her until the air began to thin and her chest heaved beneath the bar of his arm. “Call to the rains, Princess,” he told her, mouth pressed against her ear. “Don’t tell me that you can’t. Call them with me.”

“I thought we’d be fucking when we did this,” she told him in turn, but he watched her close her eyes and tip her head back against his chest.

“Soon.” Thor pressed the promise into her hair. “But if I am to make Spring come, I would get her wet first.”

“No one would believe me if I told them you were so pervy.”

Thor chuckled, and lightning slashed the sky in shades of electric purple. “Pray for Spring, Princess,
that I might answer. Call to me. I should like to feel it, the way you fill me before I fill you.”

And she did. She sagged in his arms, and he held her more fiercely for it. She called to the rains as she called to the trees, bringing at his hand fat, swollen clouds ripe with rain, ready to burst and bless the lands. They rolled in like waves, swirling across the sky in a lions roar. Thor let her prayers fill him and flew higher still into the storm-stricken sky.

“What if I dropped you?” He asked, over the thunder and screaming wind. She stiffened in his arms, eyes flying open. Below them, the City of New York was nothing at all, just faint twinkling lights, an upside-down sky. Behind the veil of his own eyes, he saw it as she did, through her mortal gaze; a thousand times higher, and darker, like some eternal abyss prepared to swallow them both whole. “What would you do?”

“Pray that you catch me.” She did not grasp at him, but let her arms fall to her side, forcing her body to relax against his own in perfect trust. He kissed her hair and felt the whole of him want her more than ever before. He felt as if he was already inside of her, even like this, fully clothed and soaring through the skies. He felt himself within her, filling her on the fuel of her own faith. It was intimate in a way nothing ever had been before, even their joining. This felt cosmic, otherworldly. Godly.

“You're too good to me, Princess. I'll grow spoiled on you.” A pleasing thought, and he kissed her hair. “Will I hear your prayers, as you fall? Will you call the rains even as you wait for me to catch you?”

“Yes.” He barely heard her whisper over the winds, but he felt the benediction in the word all the same.

“Are you afraid?” Would that he could see her face properly; he thought she was crying by the faint heave of her breath, but that could have very well been the thinning air of the high skies they held still in.

“Yes.” No hesitation in the honesty, only a simple word. “But I know you’ll catch me.”

“When the clouds burst and the rain comes, I will catch you. So pray for me, Princess, Close your eyes and pray well.” Thor did not wait for her to obey before he dropped his arm and let her fall. He caught the cloak-dress, calling to whatever in it had once been his to release her. It obeyed, making itself small and securing itself to his belt, even as she fell through the sky, bare as the day she was born.
She did not scream, and the trust in her silence rang louder than any clap of thunder.

He felt the atmosphere shift as the distance between them spread, and he heard the rise of her silent prayer in his heart and head. Farther and faster she fell, but as promised, he did not move for her until the clouds broke and burst, pouring down upon New York City a rain like it had never seen. Not torrential, but soft as a fairy wing flutter - it came quietly, almost not a rain at all, but a mist. Gentle, like Darcy, thoughtful, calculated, reassuring. A spring rain, coaxing as a mother's kiss.

He'd have sent such a downpour, it sent the streets rushing like little rivers. She sent a kiss. It was so very her, that Thor laughed, even as he chased the skies to catch her.

She'd have bruises where he caught her, hands holding too hard against the give of her skin. He grabbed her up, chest to chest, Molijner abandoned. They fell together a long time before he caught his hammer again, both bodies jarring hard against each other. She kissed his chest where she was crushed against him, and his feet sank deep into the muddied earth where they landed.

The world woke up around them, bursting forth from where his feet first touched. She wouldn't have felt it, but Thor did. The soft, dried grass came alive spreading out around them in a verdant circle, waking up from the long winter's sleep. Thor kissed her even as the trees around sprouted their new buds; soft, pale leaves uncurling shyly from their soft, spring-born branch.

He stepped away, that he might better see her in all her naked glory. Darcy stood in the spreading patch of green, mouth, and throat still bloody, hair a tangled wild mess spilling down her shoulders. He pulled at the mantle of his cloak, letting it flutter and fall to the soft new earth. Hers too, and then his vambraces, and his armor, until a pile amassed around him.

As if he had summoned her, Darcy moved to kneel before him, trembling fingers plucking at his boots. He'd have thought her cold - and rightly she should be - but when he touched her, her skin burned as bright as any star and he knew she only shook with the weight of what tied them now, something like gospel, something like faith.

Thor cupped her face before she could put her mouth on him, even as she shoved at his breeches, leaving them low on his hips. “Shhhh,” he soothed her, pressing a thumb to her wanting mouth. “Shhhh. You did well - can you tell? Do you feel how the Earth has come alive?”

“I only feel you.” Darcy looked punch-drunk, bright-eyed, staring up at him from where she knelt in the mud. The rain had painted tracks through the blood on her face, smearing it and making it bright
Thor gripped her chin, gently and then harder, until she opened her mouth for him, that he might press his thumb against the soft, wet give of her tongue. “Tonight, we need no bed. The Earth is our altar, and the trees our witness. I shall lay you down as my own offering to the coming Spring. It will have seen no finer. What say you that, Princess?”

Darcy swallowed, throat clicking as she pulled just far enough away that she might answer him. Her chin still rested in his hand, and he felt her jaw move beneath his palm as she spoke. “Am I yours to give, Big Guy? You think?”

Thor laughed at the little bite of her teeth as she closed her mouth around his thumb once more. “Oh, I do think. But offe is not you, Princess, only all the terrible things I should like to do to you.” Standing straighter, shoulders back, Thor buried the fingers of his other hand into her tangled hair. “I would have you here and now, as you are, filth and blood and desire.”

Sweet Darcy, with her keen mind and her bright eyes. She turned her head and pressed her cheek to the front of his trousers, hot breath fanning over his cock through the fine fabric. “And if you’re biased - blind - and I’m not a good offering? What then?”

For a moment, all the cosmos held themselves to perfect stillness and Thor was righteously stunned. “You offered me a heart carved out by your own hand, still warm from your own harvest, bitten by your own mouth. A sweeter offering I have never accepted. To offer you in this is to carve out my own heart and do the same. I can give nothing better, and so - there is no better an offering.”

Darcy tipped her head back, pushing gently against the palm of his hand. “Who is the Spring Mother? Is she a goddess too?”

Thor remembered, ever so faintly, asking a very similar question. When he had been young and had presented as a Fertility God, perhaps. He remembers the way his mother had laughed, just a little, as she’d taken him to the observatory in the highest pinion of the castle. “The Spring Mother is no Goddess,” Thor explained, the same way his mother had. “She is nothing and everything, I suppose. She is the womb from whence the cosmos were born. She is the cosmos, all the space between the stars- where there is nothing, she is. She is time and death and birth and life. She is all things - the mana from which life sustains. She is water when we are thirsty, fire when we are cold, and the warmth of the sun when the winter grows too long. Spring is the season of re-birth, and so we celebrate her then.” He touched her face again, held her gently in the palm of his hand. “And the best thing I can think of it to give one such as she---- is you.” He had a thought, looking down at her beneath a storm-strewn sky. “But not like this. I’ll have you rise.”
“But I---”

“Rise.” He did not help her, but she managed it with a fair amount of grace regardless. A few years past, when first they met, she had been somewhat ungainly, as if she’d yet to truly learn the measure of her body. Now though, she moved more fluidly, accustomed to her supple limbs and curves. “Do you trust me?”

Darcy’s look was unamused, and Thor supposed there was some small spec of insult in his question. “You know I do.”

He picked up his hammer and wedged it tightly into the forking trunk of a wide, gnarled oak. It would hold well. “You’ve been training with Barton,” he noted, careful to keep anything out of his voice. Darcy was a woman grown, and Barton her friend regardless of their relations (no less than he and Sif in truth; Sif was a very dear friend to him and that had not changed). She could do as she pleased. It was only that Barton was a very hands-on teacher and took great pleasure in tormenting Thor with the fact. Silently, in truth, it was nothing but an annoying little grin on his smug face. Still. “You’re strong enough to support your weight, yes?”

“For a while,” Darcy stressed, looking up at the protruding handle. “Like a very limited while. A little while.”

“I will help you,” Thor promised, lifting her up at the waist with no warning. He spun her, back to the tree and held her up, forever marveling at her infinitesimal weight. In truth, were he not careful. How little it would take, to hurt her in truth. Just a slip on his part and he could break her. Grab her too tightly, throw her down too hard - it would take so very little, on his part. He knew it. She knew it. She did trust him, with the whole of herself, and it made him hot, made him flush with something wicked, and needs. “Slip your hand through the strap,” he instructed, and she did without hesitation, slender little fingers curling over the handle in a way familiar to his cock. He felt it there, too, as he watched the flex of her arms as she tested her hold, pulling herself up out of his grip.

She swayed, back slapping hard against the tree, but held fast all the same. “Like this?”

“S’perfect.” He took a step back, that he might better appreciate the visage of her, hanging like an idol or effigy against a tree of Oak, bare for him and all the world - never looking more like a disciple, with her bloody mouth and acorn diadem still pinned to her unruly curls. Thor felt unexpectedly moved by the sight of her. “I would hold this image of you forever, could I.”

Darcy’s smile curled at the corner, and her stormy eyes sparkled. “Take a picture,” she suggested. “You’ve got that phone, Tony, makes you keep on you, right? Doesn’t Asgard have cameras?”
“Something like.” Thor dug the phone out of his pocket where Tony did indeed insist he keep it. Darcy had shown him how to take pictures and he fumbled his way through the tiny buttons on the fragile screen. “But more commonly, you can transplant an image from your mind and have it...printed, I suppose, although that isn’t quite right. The downside is that - the image is as you perceived it, not an actual truth like Midgardian cameras, although we have such things too.”

He stared at the little glass screen, taking his time to frame her right in the image. The moonlight cast her cool blue, where it poured like a river through the opening in the trees. He took the photo and wondered how he might make it tangible without Stark’s help. “Now that this moment has been captured...” He shoved the phone back into his pocket and stepped forward, where Darcy still hung, though her arms had gained a new and faint tremble. “There is something I have yet to do, in our days together and for that, I am truly remiss.”

“Oh?” Her voice shook, just as faintly as her straining arms. “What’s that?”

“I have kissed your mouth more times than I can count.” He knelt before her and kissed her thigh, the left and then the right. “I have kissed you a hundred places, and yet ---- not here.”

It was still something of a novel that she was bare between the legs, and Thor thought it innately wicked in the way she felt against his rough beard, smooth and warm and unimaginably soft. She tasted as a woman did - something Thor was sure he’d long since forgotten, it had been so long. He wasn’t ashamed to admit that he groaned, even as he eased her legs up over his shoulders, doing his part to support her against the tree. Darcy was not still in her pleasure, spine-curling, chest thrust forward as she pushed against him, a true warrior willing to fight for what she wanted. Thor held her firmly against the tree, an arm pressed over the soft expanse of her belly. She pulled at the hammer, hauling herself up, riding against him so sweetly, Thor ached in the confines of his trousers, where they still sat, low on his hips. Darcy squirmed, thighs pillowed against his cheeks, but he freed himself with a too-firm hand, groaning against her pretty cut at the hard touch. Too good, and getting himself off wasn’t the way he intended his fine offering to go, so he made himself stop. He struggled to find some shock in the cool spring air but it did nothing to quell the ache.

She really did taste damnably good.

To keep his hands from himself, he held her even more firmly against the tree with the one and fucked her even more firmly with the other. She gasped, the sweetest sound, and Thor knew if her hands were not busy maintaining their hold on his hammer, they’d be tangled in his hair, pulling, little hurts made to fuel him. Another time, perhaps. He did not begin with one finger, for any woman who could take him needn’t be so coy, but an easy two. He found her wet, as she always seemed to be for him - the sweetest blessing, to be sure. He gave her a third, and reveled in the way she squirmed, thighs clenching, and toes curling. Around them, spring still seemed intent to unwrap
itself in smoke-slow curls, growing greener and sweeter beneath the rainfall kisses. He gave her fourth to hear her cry.

“Thor!”

He’d have answered, truly, were his mouth not already pressed against her, tongue working little circles that made her gasp and writhe. He mouthed the word pray against her cunt and grinned when she understood him.

“Oakenkin,” she began, on a gasp, and something all but lost in the fire of his veins ignited. Hør meg Oakenkin, Han som styrer min styrke.”

“Demons would torture me less,” Thor managed to say, with his head pressed to her thigh, and his fingers still curled inside of her. “You are damnable, horribly, wickedly perfect.” The Oak Prayer, once upon a time a song meant to summon the strength of him, and she would say it so prettily while he knelt before her. “Ta meg med hazden og hjelp meg til å vokse.”

“Ta meg,” Darcy began, but her voice shook as Thor returned his mouth to her sweet cunt, and drove his fingers harder. “Av --- av---aklene, og rot meg ned.”

“Are you sufficiently rooted, Princess?” He asked, nipping at her thigh. “The Lightning Tree, son of-—”

“Lynetreet,” Darcy shook her head and pushed against the thrust of his fingers. “King of kings.”

“That’s not how it goes.” He sounded ---he was breathless, at her feet, stealing pleasure from the curl of her body even as she pulled tight as a bowstring and ready to spend. “The Lightning Tree is Son of Kings.”

“Fuck you, it’s my prayer now,” Darcy said, in a voice that matched his own. She looked so beautifully wild with her bloody mouth and tangled curls. But her crown still glinted, a promise of a feral Princess. “You are my King.” Or perhaps, a feral Queen. “I am the acorn in the grass, who would grow at your command,” she continued in her native Midgardian tongue, for all that her Norse was quite passable. “Guide me, and grow me, King of Kings.”

It was Son of Kings, the Oak Tree Prayer said Son of Kings, but this was Darcy’s prayer, and Thor—wanted to hurt her, it burned him so good. He felt the familiar crackle in his fingertips and wondered if she did too, where he held them inside of her. Nothing said so, in the pleasure-struck smile on her
“Again,” he demanded, curling his fingers meanly inside of her.

“Heard me Oakenkin, He who guides my strength,” she began, voice as steady as she could muster as he worked her faster, and harder, mouth moving against her once more. Stars, but she grew wet, and only for the patience he’d worked so hard to foster, did he not fuck her right then and there, cast aside his breeches and work himself right between her spread thighs. It was a near thing. “The lightning tree, King of Kings! Oakenkin, God of Strength and----fuck .”

He’d have made a joke if she hadn’t been so close, something like I’m certain I’m not the God of that too, but as it were, she’d gone so deliciously tense against him. “I’m---I’m---God . Please, please, please---I’m----I’m----”

“You are the acorn in the grass,” Thor reminded her, thumbing at her clit even as he fucked his fingers up inside of her. “Who would come at my command.”

“Yes,” Darcy promised, not even having it in herself to argue that he’d spoken it wrong. Or perhaps it was the permission she’d waited for. “Please---God, please .”

He pulled his thumb away from her, and let it join the rest, pushing up inside her soft, giving body. “Does it hurt?” He asked, a little dazed that she took it so readily. He’d---heard of such things, but never had the patience, and yet, here he knelt, with the entirety of his--- “Darcy .”

“Yes,” she gasped, riding the whole of his hand. “It fucking hurts. Don’t stop .”

“Come,” he demanded, a scant too roughly. “Come now, let me have it. Let me have it.” How might he have said it, to a worshiper on their knees before his alter, hundreds of years ago? “Give yourself over to your God, Princess.” He put his mouth back on her and felt himself grow even harder at her sharp, shocked little scream.

When she came, the sky broke open in a rain like Thor would have commanded. They were spared the bulk of it, beneath the new-leaf canopy of oak branches. Thor’s patience broke on her cries and he let her finish, wet down her trembling thighs before he could take no more. “Like this,” he told her, pushing his breaches down as far as he could manage with shaking, needy hands. “Like this---” She had half enough mind to get her legs up over his hips even as he drove into her. “Darcy. Darcy .” He was rambling, almost mindless as he rutted against her, so ferociously hard. She was soft, and wet, and open for him, her body never more giving to the demands of his cock and he was certain he’d never felt anything so impossibly luxurious than the way her body took him. Every time was somehow better, and he was certain a life with her spent as such would kill him by pleasure alone. Never had he ever felt so frenzied, even when such carnal pleasures were new to him. Darcy led a
chase Thor was certain he’d never finish, but damn him he would spend his life trying. She hung only some few inches too high for him to have her as he wanted, and he felt the roots grow beneath his feet to push him up even before the thought could fully form within his hedonous mind. She cried out at the new force, the new angle, and he felt her clench around him, somehow even wetter, the essence of her dripping down his bollocks and certainly—certainly a body could not sustain feeling so terribly good? Thor thought he could die of it, and knew it would be found a respectable warrior’s death.

She bit him, and in truth, it’s what did him in. She buried her bloody face in his neck, and her sharp teeth in his skin and Thor felt the heat of it curl up in his spine. Oh, he thought, feeling the familiar swell around him, the static of the atmosphere. Oh. “It won’t hurt,” he promised, even as he fucked her, harder and faster, bark breaking where he’d dug his fingers into the tree. “It won’t hurt.”

“Thor—your eyes,” Darcy managed, even as he fucked into her hard enough to rattle her teeth. It must have been too much, it must have hurt, but she only moved to spread her legs farther to take him deeper, as her arms strained overhead. “They’re white.”

“It won’t hurt,” he promised again, even as he felt his bollocks draw up. In truth—he hadn’t come so fast since his green years, and he hoped Darcy was too well pleasured to notice. “Can you feel it?”

“I only feel you,” she said with a gasping laugh, and Thor kissed her pretty, bloody smile just as the lightning struck.

He felt her come again. Not around him, as he had in the past, that delicious clench of her cunt. But inside of him, even as he felt his own pleasure take him fast and furious. He felt everything Darcy felt in that moment and did his best to love her with all that he had, in hopes that she might feel it in turn. Her hands slipped from the hammers strap, but Thor caught her in his own sated arms.

She fell lax, unconscious but well, all the same. He could feel the thud of her heard beneath his own. On weak legs, he lowered himself to the ground, back pressed against the petrified tree, her body held close to his own. With Darcy held in the cage of his arms, he let darkness take him too, beneath the shelter of their petrified oak tree as the rain continued to fall and the world grew more and more awake.

***

When Thor came too, the world was bright and the cloudless sky was a soft and easy blue. Darcy was already awake, sitting primly on her knees in the grass, with a butterfly in her hand, and some few more in her hair. Bees, fresh and new, buzzed over just-bloomed flowers, and the grass had
never grown quite so soft and green. She was still bloody-mouthed, the red now dark and dry once more, streaked by pale flesh where the rain had made its way down her pretty throat. Her hair was a wild mess of broken curls and tangles but her crown remained as if held by some sort of magical intervention. Her body, still bare as he’d left her night before was....was...

“It’s called the Lichtenberg Phenomena here,” she told him, without taking her eye of the verdant little butterfly. “Do you have a name for it on Asgard?”

“Søkeren,” Thor explained, taking in the branching, white marks that ran over the whole of her body. “They're...supplicant marks, for the faithful. Darcy, I’m sorry. I didn’t---”

“Sorry?” She shook the butterfly from her fingers gently, sent it fluttering away in the bright morning light. “Is it a bad thing?”

“It’s like a scar.” And hers covered the greater part of her body, going so far as to boldly curl up the left side of her jaw. “I’ve never seen one so big.”

“It didn’t hurt,” she said, in a voice made to soothe him, which seemed unfair. That he should have ever found someone so bloody rational, Thor was sure he didn’t deserve it. “Thor, I don’t mind. Lightning is a part of you.”

“It’ll never go away.” The søkeren never faded, so long as faith ran true. “So long as you believe in me, it will remain.”

They were not so far from each other, only a few fair feet, but when she crawled to him, Thor felt it in his heart. “You think it’s ugly?” She asked earnestly, standing up on her knees that he might see the greater part of it. It spiraled up from her belly, just up and to the left from her navel. It broke between her breasts, and crawled up over her collar bones, curled over her neck, crept up just the left of her jaw. It touched her legs, wrapped around her back, ran jagged and pale over her feet. It was white, almost negligible on her porcelain skin. Like a spider web in sunlight.

Thor answered honestly. “It’s beautiful and terrifying.” He brushed his thumb over the søkeren where it curved her jaw. “This is...your faith, for all the world to see. I’ve never seen a bigger mark.” Normally they were very small, less than a hand span.

“Good.” Her smile curved, something little and vicious. “I’ll always love you best.”
And he had felt it, at that moment her faith had written itself over her body. He had felt how much she loved him. “I wonder when I look at you if fate designed you to always be something I should never deserve, to ensure that I might always try my best.”

She snorted, and another butterfly landed in her hair. “Well, is it working?”

“Aye,” Thor assured her. Darcy was the good in the world Thor would move mountains to protect.

She crawled into his lap, and fit like nothing else ever had. “So...good blessing?”

“I called to the lightning without the aid of my hammer,” Thor couldn’t help the incredulity that made its way into his voice. “There is new life here, things that did not exist before. I promised New York would see a Spring Awakening like nothing they had ever witnessed, and Spring delivered, by the rains of your own body. I’m not even certain some of these butterflies are native to Midgard.”

***

“Thirteen new species of butterflies,” Tony read, from a screen. “Sixteen new species of plant life, including nine flowers. None of which seem to be invasive or harmful to current species. Air quality increased by eight percent. And the bee population quadrupled, overnight. You are literally the mother of butterflies and bees. What do you have to say for yourself?”

“Thor made me come so hard I passed out.” Darcy laughed at the awful expression that passed Tony’s face. They’d stopped in their rooms just long enough to wash and dress before Tony had summoned them to the labs. Thor’s clothes felt tight and ill-fitted, and he wondered if now as a terrible time to bring up yet another power-influx growth spurt. Darcy herself wore a shirt with a high neck, and long sleeves, covering the majority of her mark, save for the bit that kissed her jaw.

“Disinherited,” Tony muttered. He rolled up his sleeves and turned his arm up. “What about this?”

“Well, now I feel less special,” Darcy said, with a frown. “Thor?”

“The Søkeren marks the believers,” Thor explained, hoping Darcy was not honestly upset. Tony’s mark was a respectable size, though nowhere near the magnitude of hers. It wrapped around his forearm in a tidy, spiked spiral. “It is Tony’s faith for me.”
Tony groaned. “How embarrassing.”

Darcy though looked speculative. “Do you think---like, did it hit all your believers?”

Yes. Thor knew it to be true, though he could not say how. “I did say that those who found faith in me, that the world would know them for believers come this morning. This is how that promise has chosen to manifest.”

“Oh my God,” she gushed, and Thor felt warmed. “Oh man. I have too--- I need to get online for this. I need to check the website. I need too--- we should....would a registry be weird? That’s probably weird. But something, so Thor’s followers can connect and like---maybe a Twitter? Oh man. I have---so much to do-----” Tony caught her by her ponytail before she could escape, earning a squawk.

“It’ll have to wait,” he told her, mouth going pinched. “You’re being summoned.”

On the lab table, a small square of parchment - something Thor had yet to see on Midgard - laid, glimmering with swooping black ink. 177A Bleecker St.
Chapter Notes

HI!

It's been a damn month.

I forgot to mention in my last chapter - I was doing NaNoWriMo. I wrote an original story - totally made my fifty thousand words. But there was no time for anything else. Sorry guys! I haven't abandoned! (NEVER!)

Anyway - this chapter is kind of short. I just wanted to get something up so you guys knew the story hadn't died.

Love ya!

Doctor Strange stared at them, fish-mouthed and silent. Darcy, at least, did not seem to mind, fingers moving rapidly over her phone as she caught up on flickering news articles. Thor saw a number of Søkeren flash across her screen - believers. He felt them, as he felt her, the heart of their belief beating faint as a doves wing beneath his own.

“I thought,” he began, in a rather tight voice. “That we were in agreement that drawing more attention to yourself was a mistake?”

“I don’t remember saying that,” Darcy argued, without ever bothering to look up from her phone. “I remember it being brought up, but I don’t remember agreeing. I wear your cloak. I was wearing it last night.”

“Were you?” Strange asked, with a flinty look in his eye. “Were you wearing it when three-hundred and thirty-three lightning bolts touched the Earth at exactly the same moment? Were you wearing it then?”

Darcy did look up at that, wearing an expression of absolute delight. “Three-hundred and thirty-three? Is that an official count?”

“Three-hundred and thirty-three,” Strange confirmed. “Small, centralized hits - doing absolutely zero damage. The greatest of them striking in Central Park. Some few struck the Avengers Tower, as
“Thor announced during the Banquet that those who believed would be blessed.” Darcy shrugged. Thor stared at the curve of her jaw, where his mark lay.

“I’m aware of the Søkeren.” Strange stared at them from his high back chair. “But to my knowledge, they were held sacred to those who believed wholly and without hesitation.”

“And three-hundred and thirty-three people on Earth believe in Thor wholly and without hesitation.” She grinned and tucked her phone into her purse. “I’m not getting why you’re wigging out, dude.”

“Ms. Lewis,” Strange pressed, with no eyes for Thor. “In all the documented histories of the Viking Gods - Thor’s ken - less than a sixty people have been marked for Faith. Less than a sixty, in several hundred years. And last night, Thor marked over three hundred.”

“Oh.” She turned, looking up and up and up at him. “Go big, or go home, babe?”

“I promised those who held me in faith would be rewarded,” Thor shrugged, looking more careless than he truly felt. Strange had spoken honestly - such marks were so rare, they were often held as myths among the Gods, or at least, the Gods who never rendered such faith. Few did, after all. “And so they were.” He hadn’t been concerned upon seeing Darcy’s mark, for her faith was more pure than anything he’d ever known. And Tony, who was his friend and brother and confident. But to know so many believed in him so truly, that the power within him reached out and called upon them...was significant. His father had marked perhaps two people with the Søkeren in all the years Thor had been alive. In truth, it took a great deal of power. Three-hundred and thirty-three lightning bolts across the globe without the aid of his hammer, or the passing of his father's power? No small feat.

“May I see it?” Strange was looking at Darcy again, and Thor frowned. “The Søkeren?”

Darcy snorted, and hunkered down in her chair, the collar of her jacket hiding the pink in her cheeks.“It’s not exactly in the most—""

“Show him,” Thor interrupted, pushing up from his chair across from Strange. “If you are willing, I would have you show him. We should know if it is different, or concerning. I would not have you in danger.”
“All of it?” Nothing in her face or voice shook with uncertainty, and so Thor pushed, ever so gently.
“Like...all of it?”

“Whatever you feel comfortable showing,” Thor promised, for the mark was hers to show or share, but Thor...would have Strange know.

“All of it,” Darcy agreed, with a steely sort of breath. Go big, Thro thought, or go home.

He helped her from her jacket, folding it over the arm of her chair. He helped her with her shirt, and the delicate clasps of her undergarments. Strange maintained his stare in perfect silence, as Darcy shrugged off her denims and underthings, and Thor helped her step free of them. She kept her socks on, pink and white striped things that reached to her knees, and Thor had found her adorable before, but this...was very Darcy.

She crossed her arms over her chest, though it did little to hide her bounty, and huffed. “Well. What’s the verdict, Doc.”

Strange blinked, gaze flitting from Thor’s to Darcy’s, only to return to the bare, marked planes of her body. The lines had already begun to settle against her skin, faintly raised and pale white. “It’s bigger than I expected.”

“Funny you should say,” Darcy grinned, dancing a little where she stood with suppressed nerves. “I said the same thing.” She turned, showing the way the mark curved her body in fractal tendrils. “Well?”

“It looks like a Golden Spiral. Have you heard of the Fibonacci Sequence? The Golden Spiral’s occur naturally in nature and they are...perfect. Can I touch it?” Strange asked though he seemed uncertain who he was asking, looking between Darcy and Thor once more. “Nowhere untoward, of course.”

“Can he?” Darcy asked Thor, and Thor wondered at that. When had she given him such autonomy over her own body? It was a gift to be sure, and one he feared abusing.

“The heart of it lays to the left of her navel,” Thor told Strange, and knew what he would feel there, even as the man reached out with curious fingertips.
Darcy’s soft belly jumped beneath his touch, but she held herself in place even as fingertips became the whole flat of Dr. Strange’s palm. They were close, inches apart, Dr. Strange towering over Darcy’s little form, stooped only low enough to touch her belly. Thor stood back, paying witness to a moment.

“What do you feel?” Darcy asked, looking up at the Doctor with a furrowed brow.

Doctor Strange did not answer. His eyelids fluttered to a close, and Thor watched his mouth purse and move on a whispered language long since dead, but Thor knew it, and heard it, and understood nothing in a way that made perfect sense. He smiled as Darcy laid her hand over Strange’s own as if she might feel what he was feeling as if she wasn’t already (but did not know). “Strange?”

“Potential,” Strange replied at once, eyes flying open. “An endless well of potential. Like a universe yet to be born. The new faith, fresh and unbound by old testament.” He pulled his hand away slowly, fingertips lingering but a moment. “Yeshua, the Anointed One, whose footsteps sprung flowers and whose blood was blessed to save all who should follow his path - it is written that he came with such a potential.”

“Yeshua,” Darcy echoed, brow furrowing. “That’s the Jewish name for Jesus.”

“Jesus is the byproduct of Yeshua being translated first into Greek, and then English,” Doctor Strange confirmed. “The direct translation would have most likely been Joshua. But yes...Jesus.”

“Please don’t compare me to Jesus,” Darcy said, very plainly, standing bare but for her socks. “Seriously. Do not do that.”

“I compare only the potential,” Doctor Strange argued, taking a short step back and turning away. He busied himself fiddling with the oddities on his nearest table. “The faith.”

Thor collected Darcy’s clothes and helped her back into them with a bemused sort of smile. New faith - he’d not heard of such a thing among his people since before his father rose to greatness. “In my Kingdom in the Sky,” Thor recalled, helping her lastly into her jacket. “My mother Frigga was, among other things, the Goddess of Hearth and Home.”

“Among many other things,” Strange agreed. “Your mother accepted the Goddess Freya into her soul at a young age and embodied both herself and Freya who was the goddess of two worlds. Your mom was in many ways, a thrice-blessed Goddess, herself.”
“Aye,” Thor agreed, for his mother’s Gifts had much been considered the soft sort, but she had them in abundance. “Home and Hearth...some would say these were Domestic gifts but they did not just mean where we live, and love. Home is where your heart dwells, and hearth, your faith. My mother was a Goddess of heart and soul.” He paused, to smile at Darcy. “And Destiny. I have...I have wondered if this was her doing, as she joined the Kingdom Beyond, but that’s not stopped a willful God or Goddess before, and my mother was very much a known meddler when she lived still. Can you tell?”

“No,” Strange told him, and he sounded genuinely mournful. “That is not to say it isn’t your mother. Only that - it is beyond me to see. I can, however, tell you this....whatever is happening, well and beyond our control...is done with love.”

Thor took Darcy’s hand and felt the faith-fire thrum of potential. “Thank you.”

"Thor," Strange said before they could leave. "You have been asked to make a choice between three."

Thor was not so surprised to find that Strange knew. It seemed it was Strange's nature, to know such things. "Aye."

"It is not the three you think," he told him, swift and quiet. "More, I cannot speak on."

***

“Let’s fly back,” Darcy murmured, as they poured back out onto the cracked stone sidewalk.

Thor stopped suddenly, empty hand flexing around nothing at all. Darcy nearly tumbled back, as he clutched at her hand. “I haven’t brought my hammer.”

“I mean - we can take a cab. No big.” She frowned out him, at his wild, wide-eyed look, no doubt. “Babe. You’re freaking me out.”

“I didn’t bring my hammer,” he said again, feeling suddenly naked and bereft. They were a full city apart from the tower, and while he knew he could call to it - he knew he could not do so safely, or
even timely. “Darcy - I take my hammer everywhere.”

“No lately,” she pointed out and such was news to him. “Dude - you didn’t even have it at the party last night. You left it upstairs.”

“No, I----” But he had. She’d opened the windows so he could summon it and they could depart. “But I take it everywhere.”

“Honestly...I haven’t seen you with it regularly in a while.” She spoke gently as if such truths would hurt him and perhaps she had the right of it - because it did. “Hey, it’s okay. Nothing bads happened. You haven’t needed it.”

And that was true. Nothing of note had happened in much time. The bilgesnipe like beastie down in the south had been the most formidable of battles, and Thor had taken his hammer, but he could not recall using it. And since that foe - there had been some small rumbles of note. Little villains, little fights. All true, but...

Thor always had his hammer. Always. It was as much a part of him as his hands or head. And he had come to leave it behind. How foolish, how...

He hadn’t even noticed it wasn’t with him. Even now, the power of his hammer did not call to him - the light in it did not sing as it used too. It was just as formidable a weapon as it ever had been - Thor simply did not feel so drawn to it. What did that mean? He should have felt bereft without it, but he did not. He felt too big for his skin, too wild on the Earthy Plain, but such things were always true and so what did it matter if it was more now, since Darcy? Since that first night, and that last. What did it matter? What did it matter that he felt as if he’d grown?

What did it matter if it felt as if he might have....outgrown his hammer?
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

I normally wait until about 50 comments between chapters (that's where I figure all my regular readers are caught up, at fifty comments). But - since the last chapter was so short, I thought I'd sneak in another one. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As Darcy had sworn - she trained.

Thor liked to watch her, from the edges of the fitness rooms. There were no hands from his Avengers that did not aid in her training, but Thor was not so jealous. This, she did for him and his people - both those of Midgard and Asgard alike. She trained that she might best represent Earth to his Kingdom in the Sky and Thor was a warrior; he respected her battle.

Thor did not remain idle in those weeks rising up to their parting. When he was not battling his own foes on behalf of the Avengers, Darcy kept him busy. He went to Tree Ceremonies, where he pulled new oak saplings from the ground. The City of New York had even given him a small expanse in their green scapes to grow a little forest they had subbed Thorwood. Darcy had found this quite hilarious and it wasn’t until Barton explained the phallic reference that he understood her laughter and joined. And so there were tree ceremonies and trips to hospitals where he kissed freshly born babies and blessed them to his spirit, brave and strong. He went to the damaged parts of the city and helped raise new homesteads and buildings. He personally - and publicly - spoke thanks to the New York City sanitation workers who strived to keep the city clean, and encouraged the public to aid them in that front. He pet many, many dogs. Darcy kept his days as busy as her own, bouncing from task to task - but nights, were for them.

“Uuuuuugh,” Darcy groaned, pouring herself into their shared quarters on shaking legs. She had her hair piled atop her head in another messy bun, and was decked in the clinky, stretching fabric she preferred to train in. “Everything hurts. Life is a pain. I am an old, old woman.”

“You’ve not even reached your middling years,” Thor grinned, steadying her long enough that she could toe off her shoes. He scooped her up from there and carried her to the bedroom. “I asked Tony to be sure. You’re very young.”

“I’m ancient,” she argued - forever and always. “No, no, wait— I’m gross and sweaty, don’t put me on the bed.”
Thor did the very opposite and laid her gently across the blankets. “It isn’t as if we sleep here anymore,” he noted, moving to tug her leggings and underthings free. She facilitated this the best she could, lifting her hips fruitlessly before flopping back down to the mattress.

“That’s fair.” Her voice was muffled behind thin layers of fabric as she struggled to remove her top and bra at once, by herself. Thor aided her in that too, pulling them gently over her head. “Everything hurts. Training is stupid. I should just stay fat.”

“You’re absurd,” he told her, a bit more mild than intended. “You’re hardly fat. Indeed, you’re a bit thin by Asgard standards and nigh sickly for a woman of breeding age in Niflheim. They’re of the north though, and a solid body does better in the cold.” He patted her calf. “You are perfection. I see no reason for this training, other than what it does to soothe your mind. But I assure you,” he let his hand wander up her calf, her thigh, to palm her ample backside. Her body had already begun it's changing, firming in places and flattening in others. Thor mourned her softness. “It isn’t needed. Your suffering is unnecessary.”

“I’m not a physically ideal representative of the Midgardian people,” Darcy argued, weakly and with her mouth mostly smashed into her pillows. “I’m not...Fit.”

“I disagree.” He kneeled beside her bare form, and eased the tie from her hair, letting her hair tumble across the pillows in an unruly tangle. “I think Midgard would do well to consider you the ideal.”

“You’re the ideal,” she groused, lifting her head just enough to push into his hand as he drugs his nails through her hair. “Mmmhm.”

While she laid a limp mess on the bed, Thor undressed as well. Darcy paid him no mind, half asleep by the time he’d discarded his denims the floor. He collected her gently back from the bed, and she allowed it with sleepy curiosity. The showers in his quarters were spacious and stone-walled, with water that poured from overhead like directed rain that collected in the small pool Darcy referred to as the super-jacuzzi. They reminded Thor very much of the waterfall bathing chambers of Asgard. Tony himself called it a grotto. Whatever it was - Thor preferred it over Darcy’s minuscule bathing tub.

The water began to pour even as they stepped inside, and Thor thought perhaps he’d thank Jarvis later when it seemed less unsettling. He deposited Darcy into the jacuzzi, keeping his hands on her as long as it took for her to waken enough and support herself. “You don’t have to,” she murmured, watching him slide in beside her. He sat on the stone bench and pulled her close.
“Hardly a hardship,” he noted, reaching for the shimmery liquid soaps she favored. She moved without instruction, and he moved to work the tangles from her hair as she leaned against the stone edge. Thor laughed to himself, a quiet sound, as he untangled another lock.

“Share with the class?” Darcy murmured, turning just enough to catch his eye. She pillowed her head on the fold of her arms where they rested on the stone edge. “S’not me you’re laughing at, right?”

“Myself,” he assured her, massaging her scalp. The soap frothed and sparkled, bubbling in the waters where it had run down her pale spine. “It is...foolish. Only...I’ve never bathed with a lover before and I remember in my younger days I found the notion to be boring.”

“You don’t seem bored to me” she noted, with a sleepy smile, as he began to wash her back and arms. “But then you always seem surprised to find that caring comes naturally to you. Like it isn’t in your nature to nurture - when a pretty big part of you is all about nurturing.”

“Not always,” Thor hummed, pulling her back until she was flush against him in his lap so he could wash her belly and breasts with a mostly sedate touch. “For so long, I put being a War God above all else. I...thought it the most valuable of my gifts. The contradictory nature of my blessings was something like a secret shame.”

“And now?” Darcy tipped her head back, body lax in his lap and Thor like her like this, soft and sleepy in his lap. He washed her bared throat and marveled at the casual trust she had in him.

“Lately,” he told her, as he worked his thumbs into the tightened muscles of his shoulders and neck. “Lately, I have begun to think this world - and indeed most worlds - have too much war, to begin with.”

“There’s a necessity to some war,” Darcy reasons, leaning forward just enough that he can work the knots from her lower back. “Sometimes the only way to win is to fight.”

“Fairly put but...I have been long-lived, for all that I am young yet and I have seen too many times a man forget what it is he fights for. The fight becomes what he fights for and that is a madness I would spare my---”

Children. He almost says children. He very nearly almost says his children. Thor is young and has put very little thought into the young he might one day bring into the worlds. It’s a startling thought, and he finds himself with a hand spanning Darcy’s belly, soft and flat. They are...They are months old, the pair of them. It’s Midgardian minutes to Thor. It’s much too soon.
“Thor?”

“It’s a madness I would spare my future,” he finishes, belatedly. “Lately I have come to see merit in my other blessings. Fertility, at least, is rarely used for evil.”

“You have been sitting out some of the smaller rumbles,” Darcy noted, and Thor thought that to be true. His time had been better spent on other things - the things Darcy finds for him. Helping build homes for people in need. Helping grow struggling crops. Clearing waterways. Healing the world of a different sort of war.

“Would that I could use all my blessings to a balance. It seems I am to use protection and strength, or fertility. Never all at once, and all to different ends.”

“That’s not true though. Strength it isn’t just about muscle,” Darcy tells him, leaning back against his chest. He dwarfs her in the wrap of his arms and holds her close as warm water rains down upon them and the pool ripples and rises.

“No?”

“You’re...strong in conviction,” she tells him, folding her hands over his own. Her smallness is a marvel that fascinates and frightens him. On Midgard, she but small but stout; not the smallest, and not weak. But on Asgard; Darcy will be tiny. Frighteningly tiny. “You’re strong in your friendship, in your loyalty. Your love.” She lifts there tangled hands and kisses both his palms. “Strength isn’t just what you can do with your body. It’s...strength is fortitude, and resilience and spirit and backbone. It’s the ability to keep going when the world would hold you back. I’ve never thought of you as the God of picking heavy shit up. That’s never what I thought strength meant, for you.” Wriggling in his lap, she turns to sit sideways that she might look at him as she speaks. “You are the God of Protection, Strength, and Fertility. It means what you want it to mean.”

“I’m certain that isn’t how it works,” he tells her, but even as he says it - he’s not so sure. So much of being a God is finding your destiny. Blessings are just Gifts - it is to the Blessed to decide how they might be used.

***
They do not join that evening, even as they crawl into bed together. Thor laid Darcy out and worked the last of her pain from her body with firm, warm hands. He was hard where she’d gone lax against the furs, but it was easily ignored in favor of the simple touch.

“Do you want me too---” She gestured to his soft, striped sleep pants. “I mean, I’m already naked.”

“You are sore,” he argued, easing her back against the furs and rolling her belly up. “Let me care for you.”

“I don’t mind,” She insisted looking like hedony personified, with her sleepy eyes and naked sprawl across dark fur. Thor had pulled her hair back into a single, loose braid down her back and it coiled over her shoulder. She puts her foot on his thigh, and he grabs it, digging his thumb into the arch. “Really.”

“I can wait,” Thor promised, rubbing at the delicate bone jutting from her ankle. “I would rather have you tomorrow when I needn’t be so cautious. I’m not inclined to be gentle with you, Princess. I would have you fighting it, first.”

She grinned at that and shrugged lazily. “If you insist.”

***

Darcy’s staring at her phone, mouth open and eyes wide. Thor sets his pop tart down and prepares himself for a new fight. Evil favored the mornings he’d rather be in bed, and this morning was such.

“TIME magazine wants you on the cover,” she says, blinking wildly at him. “Oh my God.”

He feels it as he always does when she says it. “This is good?”

“Uh - yeah . TIME’s support of the Avengers really helped them when they were polling less than favorable. They have mass press power and are usually pretty fair and factual. They’re interested in hearing about the Søkeren, and your followers. They want a full interview.” She taps at her phone. “I want you in there as soon as possible. I want you in there---tomorrow. Are you free tomorrow? We’ll bring our own photographers if they can’t get one. I wonder if I can fly in Annie Leibovitz.”

Thor had very little idea who that was but did not doubt Darcy’s ability to fly anyone in. “Should I
The interview is strange. Dressed in her cape - masquerading as a fine black coat today - Darcy is seated beside him, out of the camera’s view. It isn’t a live interview, but they intend to show it on their internet. “Mr. Odison,” a woman greets him, with a firm handshake. She shakes Darcy’s too. “Ken - Get Miss Lewis in the shot. I want her in the interview.”

“Oh---No, I couldn’t. This is Thor’s show----”

“From what I’ve followed, you’ve been a massive part of Mr. Odinson’s campaign.”

“Thor,” he corrects, dismissing the mister all at once. He will not ask them to address them with the royal formality, but Mister sounds very strange indeed. “It is a pleasure to meet you, Miss...”

“Belinda Luscombe,” she told him, taking a seat across from them in a squashy, ivory chair. “You can call me Bel. Ms. Lewis - I was glad to find you so agreeable to the interview. And so quickly.”

“We’re right up the road,” Darcy waves her hand dismissively as if she hadn’t unplanned entire days itinerary to get Thor in. “TIME’s a great publication for Thor’s platform. You’ve treated the Avengers fairly in the past. We’re happy to work with you again.”

“Thor’s platform,” Belinda echoes, with an easy smile. “I was at the Ambassadors Ball, Miss Lewis. I paid witness to both yours and Thor’s impassioned speech. I’ve been reporting on the Avengers since they first formed. And I’ve followed your Avengers articles from the beginning. You’re doing good work.”

“They’re heroes, but they’re people and I think the world needs reminding on occasion,” Darcy explained, but Thor could hear the reed of pleasure in her voice. Her work was important to her.

“All but Thor,” Belinda replied, with an even tone and a curious eye. “You didn’t portray him as anything so simple.”

“Because he isn’t.” The steel in Darcy’s voice lit a fire in him, and he touched her hand. “Thor is a God.”
Belinda sits back in her chair and stares at them. “I know,” she says, pushing up her sleeve to reveal a Søkeren of her own. “I know he is. As I have said - I’ve followed the Avengers from the beginning. I want to help you.”

Still touching Darcy’s hand, Thor reached out to press his palm to Belinda’s arm and the reverberating thrum of belief flowed through him like a current. “You mean to use your platform to further mine.”

“In as much an unbiased manner as I can manage,” Belinda warns. “But I would give you the chance to speak if nothing else.”

Darcy’s gaze narrows. “And what do you want in return?”

“Nothing.” Belinda shook her head. “I really just want to help. Tell me about the Søkeren? I know what it means to me. I can feel it. But what does it mean to you?”

“They are the mark of the faithful,” Thor explained, leaning back in his chair and cupping Darcy’s hand in his own. “I promised that those who believed would be rewarded, and the Søkeren is only the beginning. I cannot heal the scars of Midgard overnight, but where there is faith, there is a strength.” Darcy’s hand clenched his own. “And so I would work to make right this Earth. To clean her, and grow her anew. Bring back her dying light. Already I have begun this work - and I would teach my people to do the same.”

“There’s been reports of new species of butterflies taking up residence in New York - born the night of the ball. The night your people were marked.”

Thor looked down and smiled. “The ball fell on the evening of a fond Asgardian ceremony. The Summoning of Spring. I celebrated on Midgard as my people on Asgard do - and the butterflies and bees were the fruit of such merriment.”

“Tell me about the ceremony?” Her gaze moves to Darcy, curious and bright. “Were you a part of it?”

“We ate the heart,” Darcy confirms. “I know a lot of people found it disturbing. I read the blogs. I read the comments. The heart was a part of Thor’s ceremony. He is but one God. We called to the Spring Mother, to bless Earth.”
“We paid her homage,” Thor adds, with a wicked little smile. “In the way that Fertility Gods do.”

“I’m not pregnant,” Darcy adds hastily. “One of Thor’s laments as a God of Fertility is that no one should become pregnant that doesn’t want a child.”

“No babe unwanted should get,” he corrected. “Both parties joining should want the child, for it to come to fruition. On Asgard, all children are cherished.”

They spoke in depth on what it meant to be Thor, Prince to the Kingdom in the sky, and a God. They spoke of his plight on Earth, his intentions, his rocky start, and more. They spoke, very briefly, of Jane.

“Amicable,” Thor said shortly. “In the end, our love of the stars outshined our love of each other. Nothing more, and nothing less.”

When it came time for the photographs, Thor found Darcy arguing with the photographer as he stepped out of his dressing room very underdressed.

“It’s part of my vision,” the woman said, staring Darcy in the eye. “You flew me here.”

“Yeah,” Darcy agreed, squaring her stance. “To photograph Thor, Ms. Leibovitz!”

“And he’ll be in the picture!” Annie Leibovitz shook her head. “Lewis - TIME didn’t ask for Thor. They asked for Thor and his pretty little girlfriend from the party.”

“She is more than my beloved,” Thor interrupted, hating the way girlfriend felt flat through the all speak. “The Lady Darcy is the Midgardian Representative for the Council of Nine in the Kingdom in the Sky. She will hold my father's ear - King of Kings on Asgard. And too - she has been an invaluable aid in my acclimation on Midgard. Darcy is my council here on Earth; it is she who aids me in deciding where my efforts will be most useful. She also represents the Avengers Initiative, and both the creator and director of the Avengers Initiative Ambassador International Association. To call her my pretty little girlfriend is correct but dismissive. Darcy Lewis is my faith personified.” An impassioned speech to be sure, but Thor was also nearly naked. “That said - she should absolutely join me.”
“Thor,” Darcy stressed, gaze fluttering down his bare form. He had been given a very small, flesh-colored pair of shorts, to be paired with his cape and nothing else. “I’m not the God here.”

“You are my believer,” Thor told her, soft and reassuring as he touched her belly, where her own Søkeren lay. The photographer stepped away just far enough to create for them an illusion of intimacy or privacy. “Is that not what these photos are for? I am no God, without you. And too - these new followers...they come as you lead. The Søkeren marked no one, as it marked you. So I shall grace this cover as you direct me, but I have said it before. Show no life of mine, without you in it.”

She smiled, despite herself, pink stealing across her cheeks. “I can’t take you seriously when you’re wearing spankies.” Dipping her fingers into the waistband of the shorts, she snapped them and laughed when he startled. “Do I have to be naked too?”

She did. Thor was pressed against a black backdrop in nothing but his spankies, and Darcy - stripped bare but for his cape - was pressed against him. She held her arms crossed over her breasts, as people came to sort their hair in artful messes and straighten his crown atop his head. They dusted Darcy’s Søkeren with a sparkling translucent powder that made it stand out even more against her milky skin.

“Lovely,” Annie Leibovitz clapped her hand, a number of heavy cameras hanging from her neck. “Nothing artsy for you two. I want natural. I want ease. I want to see the trust between you too.”

“Kind of hard when I’m nipping up and naked in front of a bunch of strangers,” Darcy grouched, closing her eyes.

Thor leaned down to whisper in her ear. “Do you remember,” he said, as quiet as he could, as assistants and such milled around the room, adjusting lighting and fiddling with mechanical beasts. “In Stranges sitting room? The mirror?”

“Mmmm,” Darcy hummed, letting her head fall back. Her hair had been made to fall in a tumble of curls over both shoulders, looking somehow both managed and wild all at once. Her lashes fluttered to a closed and Thor moved to touch her bare hip. “We’re supposed to look natural. Not turned on.”

“One and the same, with you,” he teased, moving his other hand to touch her throat. Darcy smiled as he cupped beneath her jaw and traced the lines of her mark where it hugged the curve. The photographer snapped a photo, the click-shutter gasp loud where all else had fallen silent. Darcy
froze against him and hugged her middle tighter. “Easy, Princess. This is a good practice. When we go to Asgard, all eyes will be upon us.”

“But I won’t be naked,” she argued, forcing her arms to go every so slightly lax. Her nipples were hidden behind her forearms, but the greater wealth of her breasts were still exposed.

“There are situations that call for nudity on Asgard,” he told her, very seriously, as he hid his smile in her hair. “Why don’t you pray, Princess? Perhaps some God should hear you.”

It had only been a jest, but Darcy did. She pressed her hands together, the Midgardian symbol for worship, and tipped her head back to rest against his chest. He held her throat even as it rolled beneath his palm, and he felt the call of her beckon to him, and flutter in his chest.

He looked up to catch the photographer's gaze and knew they made for a fine sight, Thor towering over Darcy, hand cupping her throat as she fell lax against him in perfect trust. He did not smile but held the camera's gaze with all the intensity he felt inside for Darcy. He reached for her call - for the call of all his faithful and let it light him and guide him.

***

TIME published their article a week later, with Darcy and Thor splashed across the cover, his cape matching perfectly with the iconic red border.

“Your body makes me uncomfortable to call you my daughter,” Tony told Darcy over breakfast, dropping the magazine on the table. “Everything about you makes me uncomfortable.”

“Sorry Daddy,” Darcy cooed, picking up the magazine. “What the fuck. I didn’t approve any photoshop.”

Thor took the magazine and held it aloft. “I see nothing altered. It is as your body looks against mine.”

“Uncomfortable,” Tony repeated.
“That is not what my body looks like,” Darcy argued. “Plus - your eyes.”

“That is exactly what your body looks like,” Thor told her, opening the magazine to find the other photographs. “Generous perfection. And my eyes - I followed the call of your prayer. That is the lightning inside me manifesting.”

“S’kinda hot,” Darcy muttered angrily, yanking the magazine out of his hands. “Dammit. We look good.”

“Why do you sound so roth? We are an attractive couple. You should not be so surprised.” He slipped a second piece of toast onto her plate and more bacon. “Do you suspect the article will not be well received?”

“Belinda sent me parts. It’s very well written and entirely unbiased as she promised. We don’t look like we’re buying favors or playing sides. Although she slipped some stuff about my representative position in there and it’s already been misconstrued. Apparently, some people think it’s biased to elect your girlfriend for a council.”

“I elected you prior to our relations.” Thor frowned, considering. “I understand the concern, however - the council is made up of ten to maintain a balance. All parties are heard with equal measure. And too - if it were not so, the Midgardians would benefit from the bias.”

“Earth people aren’t exactly known for their sound reasoning,” Darcy explained, shaking a length of bacon at him. “I think it would benefit Midgard to have an Asgardian Ambassador present on Midgard in the future. A liaison, or something. Does that sound reasonable?”

“It does. We have several ambassadors on the Nine Realms. It is something to be discussed on our venture, for sure.” There were a number of people who would be well suited for the position, but he would allow Darcy to make the final decision. Such was her right as Representative.

“How long until you leave?” Tony asked, flipping the magazine over to hide their bare forms. “Seven or so weeks? You should come down to the lab soon. I’ve been working on some new things for you.”

Darcy perked up immediately. “Oh?”
"Little a this, little a that," Tony shrugged. "Maybe something that can store Thor’s specific lightning to be dispelled at a later time. You know. Like a taser. But cooler ‘cause I made it."

“Oh my god, you made me a Thor Taser?” She threw herself forward to pull Tony into a fierce embrace. “Best dad ever!”

Chapter End Notes

i jumped tenses a bunch in this chapter and I'm shitty because it's harder to edit from my phone so once I'm back on my lap top, I'll fix that.
Chapter Notes

hope you wanted to be punched in the face with a new chapter because BAM here it is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They’re in one of the upper suites when the worlds tilt on their individual axis and leave Thor spinning. Darcy’s putting on the tact-suit piece by piece behind a filmy curtain, as Tony instructs. Thor is only watching, benignly happy to watch them bicker and fidget. Thor and Darcy’s coming departure had sent Tony into a whirlwind of conflicting parental emotions, and Darcy had born it with goodwill and a few little waves of her own.

Darcy’s fixing her braid, and Tony’s asking about the way the leather curves over her calves - does it fit right, does it feel right, are the buckles too large, can she wiggle her toes. Thor remembers with crystalline detail his mother asking such things as the tailors adjusted the hems of his trousers, pins caught between their lips to keeps. Tony is no surprise to Thor, a doting father, and a good one at that. It’s that thought Thor trips over when it happens.

Odin is dead.

It burns...no. Not a burn. It feels like a thousand glass shards shattering to irreparable dust in his body. It hurts the way removing a splinter does - pain and then the phantom it leaves behind. Thor is no stranger to pain. Thor has hurt before. Pain is a balm, really. What is pain but spice to existence, that proves that life remains? It is when the pain fades that we die.

Thor knows pain. He has felt it at the edge of a blade, at the lick of a flame, at the bite of impact. He has known it where he knelt over his mother’s body. He has known it when he looked into the abyss that dare swallow his brother whole.

His father, Odin, is dead.

As he stands there, while Darcy disrobes, Thor is struck with a terrible truth. No one will mourn the loss of his father, as no one knows where he lay, in the All Sleep. He can’t deny the benefit of the secret - even the Weavers had kept their silence. Odin’s powers had not come to Thor, even as his eyes fluttered closed. For a brief, terrible moment, Thor felt his heartburn a hole in his chest. He could not take the throne without the benefit of his fathers Grace - and an empty throne was a terrible, wicked temptation. It meant, shortly put, war for Asgard and the Kingdoms of Nine. But wicked Loki, clever, terrible wicked Loki...God of Chaos....he had taken Odin’s face instead, the throne by proxy and prevented the inevitable cosmic destruction to come. Chaos had maintained the balance. Chaos held the crown.

And so, Odin was is, and no one would know. No one would mourn him as a King deserves. No one would know. Would his soul be called to Valhalla? Would he find Frigga? Thor is struck. But no - his father was never a warrior in battle, but a warrior in life. Every day was a battle to be won, and Odin had, until this moment.

And too - Frigga would find Odin’s soul where it dwell among the stars and pluck him from the cosmos to join her. Thor can’t fathom anything else. No - Odin is where he belongs. Thor would
know if he wasn’t. He would feel it.

“Babe?” Darcy’s leaning around the partition, hand out for her cloak. “You okay?”

He is, he thinks, as the pain settles and something new takes hold inside him. He’s blinking at her, wordless and stunned when Heimdall’s voice breaks the cloud of his mind. He should have expected such a summoning, and indeed - they would have departed within the coming week regardless. Loki, no doubt, is in a frantic panic. Loki, no doubt, had demanded Thor be summoned immediately and had already advised a pretense for the early return.

Still, it is a surprise when the windows shatter. Tony shouts, bits and bobs of the Iron Suit folding over his body, a natural reflex to any perceived threat. He throws himself between Darcy and the window, and Thor is choked by that - by the love Darcy inspires. Darcy herself is clutching the curtains, bare but for her boots and gloves, looking wild-eyed herself, as her fingers curl into fists and she braces herself for an attack. Thor grabs for her, arm hooked around her belly. “Asgard calls us,” he bellows over the high, whipping winds. The New York Sky screams its sorrows. “I am sorry Stark - we must go.”

“What? No --- Next week---”

“My father is dead,” he says, the words weighted and wooden on his tongue. “We must go.”

The Iron Suit fades away and Tony’s face is a wash of expression. “Take care of her,” he says, words stolen to the sky. To Darcy, he says so solemnly - “come back.”

Darcy is a rigid, naked doll in his arms, barely covered by the curl of Thor’s cape. “I will,” she promises, calling the words against the wind. The Bifrost catches, and Thor braces them both. She squirms in his arms, tangled in the twist of cape and cloak. “Tony----I love you!”

It ripples in Thor’s heart, a little dove-heart thrum. It feels as it does when a child is born - that sort of love that is bright and new, the first spring curls of a family born. Their tower family is sewn of different seeds, but it is a family. Thor hates that they must go now. Tony stares, eyes wide as the sky breaks open. “I----” The ground shakes and the bridge appears and Thor cannot resist the pull. “I love you too.” The echo of his words chase them across the cosmic skies, and Thor is glad of it. Darcy will need them.

***

When they slam back to the ground - the air is warm and familiar. Thor holds Darcy on her feet as she gains her bearings. “Tap your heels together,” he reminds her, and she does with shaking legs, activating the boots and gaining strength against the gravity of Asgard.

“Thor,” she says, wide-eyed and wild. “Thor---I’m fucking naked. I’m fucking naked, oh my God---There are----people. There are fucking---”

She is very, very bare. Naked yes, but for the cloak, boots and gloves. He’s horrified on her behalf - can’t imagine how she feels. The greater part of Asgard stands behind them, staring, murmuring, a delegation meant to greet the Prince of Asgard. They are the highborn, the people of note, the Council of Nine, not just from Asgard but from all realms. They’ll form the procession from the bridge to the dais that overlooks the city where the other Asgardians will congregate and wait. Darcy is absolutely going to murder him.

He can’t shield her. He can’t cover her. He can’t allow her to be seen by Asgard as fumbling, or
foolish. She must enter as she means to continue, as the Midgardian Representative and he loathes himself for what he must demand of her. She must stand now, naked and confident and sure. Her position is new - her seat empty for hundreds of years past - and she cannot be met with doubt. He won’t allow it.

“You must meet them as you are,” he tells her, as they murmur and stare up at him. He wills it that she believes him, that she trusts his words. It is - terrible, really. Modesty is a human virtue sewn very deeply into their souls and thus - this must be her nightmare. “You must act as if this was your intention.”

“Are you fucking----” She braces herself; grits her teeth, drops her shoulders, lifts her head. “Okay,” she says, as calmly as she can muster. “Okay. Okay. Right.”

Such remarkable trust. Such depthless, remarkable trust. Thor sets her cloak on her shoulders, and to her benefit, it does not fold over her body, does not spill itself across her skin to cover her as it so often does. It remains a cloak, and she remains bare.

“Thor Odinson,” Heimdall calls voice carrying from the foyer to the delegation on the bridge. “Son of Odin, Prince to the Throne of Asgard, Kingdom in the Sky, the Thrice Blessed God returns!”

They cheer and bellow and greet him as they care to - the prodigal son returned, their hero in good faith. Thor stands tall beside little Darcy and looks out across his home. It is a balm, his beautiful kingdom, and it soothes an ache in his heart he forgets exists until it is healed. It always does.

Heimdall introduces Darcy too, a bright gleam to his orange eyes. “The Lady Darcy Eloise Lewis-Stark, Newly Appointed Representative for Midgard to the Council of Nine, Head Peacekeeper of the Avengers International Ambassador Initiative, and Midgardian Priestess to the Temple Thor.”

She startles a little at the title but holds her head all the same. Thor had not considered it - but Darcy’s work to inspire faith in him would make her a Priestess by Asgardian standards. It makes him smile; she deserves the name.

They cheer louder for her and Thor wonders at that. Darcy wonders too if the slight tremble is to be believed. Through the delegation, a cleave is formed and Thor watches the face of his father glide forward.

“Son,” he says, and Thor marvels at Loki’s ability to hold such a jovial tone. “Asgard welcomes you and yours.”

But for all that he sounds his bright and fatherly self, Thor sees it - the chasm within that calls as like does with like. Loki felt it too - when Odin died. Felt it like only a Son of the God of Gods could.

“Father,” Thor greets him, moving to the side to introduce Darcy. “This is—-

“Oh we know,” Loki tells him, a shimmer in his pale eyes. “We know, we know. The girl has her name in the stars now.” His gaze strays to Darcy’s belly, and Thor—-does not like his brother looking at her. “The Weavers have begun a new tapestry for you, Søkeren. You’re the first of your kind in nearly a thousand years.”

The delegation’s murmurs grow louder around them, as they hold their gazes excited and bright. The Weavers have not begun a new tapestry in a very long time. It is significant - as significant as Thor’s three hundred Marks of Faith and the perfect fractal spiral spilling across her skin. Odin - the real Odin - would not have welcomed her with so much festivity, but he would have welcomed her all the same, regardless of his opinions on Midgardians. The Søkeren was magic beyond the Gods. It was olde and respected.
Darcy is staring at Loki - at who she believes to be Odin- with a furrow in her brow. “I’ve seen you before. I---I’ve had dreams about you.”

“Have you?” Loki cocks his head to the side, silver hair spilling like water over his shoulder. “And what is it I say to you, girl?”

“You were a crow,” she says, frowning. “No - a Raven. You came to me as a raven, but it was you. You told me----” She stops, body going rigid beside him as if she’s only just remembered she is bare and they are watching. “I don’t think I’m supposed to say, actually. You---” She turns to Thor. “He gave me an eyeball, so I wouldn’t say. I didn’t remember until just now.”

“It is a Geis,” Loki says, with a voice that is only a little condescending. “Secrets sealed with magic. I am fond of them.” Less than the real Odin might have spilled. “Come. Your return is always cause for celebration Thor, and Asgard is keen to welcome this girl you would name for Princess..”

All the Stars in the Sky - Darcy is absolutely going to murder him. “Father.”

“You named your intended, my son. It was heard across the sky, and writ in the Stars. We were surprised given that you made known your departure from the other Midgardian Girl, but the Weavers have laid the strings and so it must be that you invoked it on the altar,” Loki tells him, moving forward to cut through the delegation once more. Thor is forced to follow, Darcy staring wide-eyed up at him, her hair flying wildly around her face from where the Bifrost had stolen her braid. “I called off the Courtlings brought by the Nine Realms for the arrangement. If you’d prefer, I can call them back?”

“No,” Darcy says, sounding very winded. “No, I’m----That. I’m that. But I’m not a Princess. Midgard has them, but they wouldn’t hold the title for the planet, just parts. That said, I’m not one.”

“As he is my Son, and represents Asgard on Midgard, Thor has the power to lay such titles. And too - I have come to learn you hold a significant power on your realm. Peacekeeper is a title unto its own, but you were adopted into a house that, by Asguardian standards, measures fairly to our Royal Houses. We’ve made note the Stark Name, and taken such things into consideration. The Council of Nine has met on the subject and agreed to the union.”

“I don’t believe the Midgardian Representative received the invite,” Darcy says, very lightly for someone crossing an intergalactic bridge made of prism and ice.

The delegation has taken to two lines behind them, and they move at a pace set by Odin. “We assumed your vote to be in favor.”

“Respectfully,” Darcy says, smiling prettily up at his Brother-Father, “I’d ask that the council refrain from making any more assumptions on my behalf.”

Loki pauses at that - a considerable and noted pause. His eyes narrow and Thor is struck by how it suits Odin’s face with familiarity, for all that it is very much Loki. They were always more alike than either was ever willing to admit. “Am I to believe you would have voted differently?”

“Bias creates imbalance,” Darcy told him evenly, as they took lead of the procession. Indeed, Odin and Darcy head it, Thor falling behind by only a step. He doubts very much Darcy knew what such a position meant, nor what it hearkens that she held the king’s ear so readily. Odin would not have allowed it. Indeed, Odin would not have addressed her directly, but for some unfathomable reason - Loki is excited. It does not bode well. “Aren’t you afraid of a conflict of interests? If I’m Thor’s--- Thor’s----”
“Betrothed,” Loki supplies, taking no measure to hide his amusement.

“Yes,” Darcy agrees, a little dazedly. “As well as his Priestess, and here to represent Midgard...isn’t there a conflict of interests? Specifically, my interests in Midgard, and Thor.”

“Thor does not sit the council,” Loki assures her, sounding very much like an adoring grandfather, than anything else. Thor wants to kick him in the back of the knee, badly. “Nor do I, though any final decision is mine. The Council is its own balance. You may be as biased as you desire, it’ll have no effect if the bias is not shared.” Loki turns to Thor, a lilt in his smile. “This one is not like the other.”

“No.” Thor narrows his eyes. “She is not.”

***

As they stand hand in hand on the dais, a long narrow plinth that overlooks the tip of the City of Asgard that lays at the foot of the mountain palace, Darcy’s smile is frozen on her face.

“I’m going to fucking kill you,” she says, through her teeth. Her hair and cloak are caught in the wind, the black leather gleaming against the rise of Asgard’s three suns. It casts her in halos and rainbows of light. Telling her that she looks beautiful right now would be an absolute mistake, but Thor thinks it none the less. “Your whole fucking kingdom is looking at me and I am naked, Thor. What the actual fuck.”

“They look impressed,” Thor notes, and she lets her nails bite into the back of his hand. “Often, Priestess’s choose to go naked. Especially in the Fertility faction. It’s very common. They are not perturbed by your display.”

“I’m perturbed! I didn’t even know I was a priestess.” She’s seething, and Thor thinks that’s very reasonable, all things considered. But she does not say - I’m not a priestess. She says instead I didn’t know. That is telling. That is...significant. “I didn’t even shave my legs this morning. Ugh.”

He snickers, and she shoots him a withering sort of look. “They’ll think you’re hairlessness odder than your nudity.”

“Oh, awesome. Because I wanted more things to feel super fucking uncomfortable about.” She’s shaking and seething, and violent with her anger and Thor likes the bite of it but knows it does her no good. She is uneasy in a new world. She is out of place. She is out of sorts. She is praying, loud enough to burn his blood, and so Thor must answer as her God, and not her lover. “I don’t belong up here, I’m not---a fucking princess? Really? You call me that when we fuck. It’s a pet name.” He can feel the hysteria bubbling up inside her, bravery shaking and pulling. She’s praying so sweetly. She’s praying for him and she doesn’t even know it. “It’s a joke.”

It’s not a joke. Thor has meant it every time he’s said it. Equals in all things, that is what he told her, and he meant it. His heart invoked it, even subconsciously, and made it true. “Kneel,” he tells her, because she is not ready to be a Princess, not in this moment. He drops her hand and pushes her forward to the plinths tip.

Darcy stumbles faintly, but she does not fall. She looks up at him over her own shoulder. “Wha---What?”

“Kneel,” he tells her again, looking down at her. Every Goddess in the Sky, but Darcy is beautiful like this. Red-cheeked and wild-haired and bare to every world before him. Thor cannot escape his pride. “Greet them as a Priestess, instead of a Princess. Greet them as you are, Darcy. Greet them as
my supplicant.” She can deny the royal title - that is her right - but she would never deny her faith.

She kneels. Thor is certain nothing has ever looked so righteous, so lovely. He stands behind her. She is straight-backed, with her head held high, and Thor wishes she had her crown. “Asgard,” he calls, and his voice is thunder across the city. “On Midgard, I have found Believers! Darcy Lewis is the flame! And she has lit the fires in supplication. On Midgard, they believe. I have heard the call of prayer! I have heard the chorus sing in true faith and I am emboldened. Look now upon the face of new credence. The Stars have spoken; she is marked for faith.” He stands beside her and holds out his hand for hers. She takes it like a child, but her shaking confidence does not fold. “I am Thor, Prince to the Kingdom of Asgard, the Thrice Blessed God and she is Darcy Lewis who believes in me.”

***

When the procession finally disperses and they are left to adjourn to the palace, Thor is certain Darcy is going to demand she be returned to Midgard. “Father,” he says, strangled as they stand in the receiving chamber. There across the ceiling is a new fresco, the Saga of Odin spinning to make space for new tales.

It’s Darcy, standing between before an oak tree, and she is bare. She is bare, with her hands bound over her head by his hammer. The Søkeren glitters where it spirals from her belly, and the gems inset over her diadem sparkle where the sun spills across the room.

“Oh my God.” Darcy’s staring up at it, mouth agape. Her cape curls at her ankles, sensing her distress. The corners are upturned like viper heads, swaying as if to strike. “Thor, that’s---That’s---”

It is not new. It is not from today. It is very much from the Midgardian solstice and very much on the ceiling above the Throne, at the end of the Odinsaga, making a new chapter for Asgard. “Father?”

“It appeared last night,” Loki explains, standing beside Darcy and not Thor which is very much against protocol and very much like Loki. “The council gathered to discuss how we would proceed and agreed that you should be summoned. There are others, in the Temples. A statue in the gardens your mother dedicated to the Priestesses. She has been born into the stories, Thor.”

“Am I naked in all of them?” Darcy’s voice is frank and flat, and she looks at Loki when she speaks.

“It’s common among Priestesses,” Loki told her, which is as much a yes as anything else. “I was pleasantly surprised, Thor. Midgardians are known for their considerable modesty. To find her willing to embrace Asgardian customs is a good sign for the future of our kingdom.”

“This is how I worship,” Darcy manages to say and Thor is impressed by the shakeless bell of her voice. “But I do wear clothes. I will be wearing clothes, while I’m here. Like - within the relative future.”

“A pity.” Loki’s borrowed gaze shifts down Darcy’s body and Thor is absolutely going to strike him. He can feel the static at his fingertips calling to the sky. “Hmm. She’s still a bit small, but I do like this one better than the last, Thor. I dare say, the frescoes were what swayed the council. Though the statue was very compelling too.”

“Ooookay,” Darcy says, and her cloak unfolds itself around her body like one of the Black Widows’ catsuits. “I don’t know who you think you fucking are----”

Loki squares his borrowed shoulders and towers over Darcy. “I am Odin, King----”

“And I’m important,” Darcy cuts him off. Thor is endlessly grateful in that moment that it’s Loki and
not his father standing before them. “So maybe you don’t talk about me like that.”

“The council served well without a Midgardian representative for years. We needn’t change things now. I agreed to your appointment to make my son more amenable to an arranged marriage.” Ah. There. That sounded more like Odin. “By what do you claim importance, girl?”

Darcy points up to the fresco, glittering and fresh. “That thing.” She points to her belly. “This thing.” She points to Thor. “Him.” She narrows her eyes. “And you. First of my kind in a thousand years, your majesty? I didn’t ask to be here. You brought me here. I won’t be treated like a second-hand citizen just because you don’t like Midgard.”

Loki stared at her for a long moment, and Thor braced himself for violence. “I like this one better than the last,” he said again, but differently this time. He sounded...intrigued. “Have you brought home for yourself a brave and foolish warrior, Thor? Your vanity knows no bounds.”

“She’s a fair bit smarter than I.” It was a warning, to be shared between them both. Thor was struck at the horror; Darcy and Loki were very much alike.

Loki smiled and it is wicked. “A blessing, to be sure.”

Chapter End Notes

hey bitch hey, I know y'all were jonsing for some Loki.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

My dudes, we are like twenty shy of 1000 comments and I can't fricken believe this.

1000 comments. Twenty chapters. 100,000 frick frackin words. For a Thor/Darcy.
What happened?
Where did this come from?
Will there be more.
Where did this come from, Super Hot Thor?

This is a RARE PAIR. I don't even know what I'm doing. I just like bangin' hot blondes.

THIS SHIP IS A FRIGGEN CANOE.

I love you all. Have some angst and fluff and stuff.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

She's nothing like Odin, but she’s exactly like Loki.

But then - Thor supposes that would make sense. He’d never found his brother to be so very terrible, not until recent years. Indeed, in Thor’s more formidable young and foolish years, he’d thought they’d stay side by side, always. To fight, and rule, and live forever. More foolishly, he’d never noticed how distanced Loki had come to feel, in the shadow of Thor’s ego. He had loved his brother and admired him; he had always been the smarter one, the more clever one, the quicker, sharper, fiercer one. Loki was not a coward; he was just too smart to run head-on into anything, especially when the back door benefited him more. Loki never needed a hammer; he had words . That Thor had fallen for a woman just as hard-headed, just as stubborn, smart and clever....was unsurprising. Once upon a time, Thor wanted to be like Loki, in the same vein that he longed to be more like Darcy. Even now - as much as his brother infuriated him, Thor was not ignorant to his trials. Loki was good - and the world might never know.

Leading Asgard as he was, wearing the face of his Father - it was no boon. Loki craved attention above all things. He craved acknowledgement, recognition, glory; it was all he ever wanted, from their father. And now he stood, wearing the face of the very man who would not grant him such praise, and abjuring any chance for acclaim that Asgard might remain safe. It was as selfless a thing as Thor had ever seen from Loki, and it was so very significant, so very great . Loki was saving a place he never felt welcome, wearing the face of a man he never felt loved him, to no benefit of himself, to no profit. The world would remain blind to Loki’s sacrifice, as they remained blind to Odin’s death.
Thor felt inexplicably old in the wake of ignorance death. How many a kingdom hinged on such secrets, he wondered? He did not want to know.

He follows Darcy out the King's private quarters, shamefacedly walking behind her as she stalks through the abandoned corridor. The boots Tony provided give her more speed to her stride than she had on Earth, and Thor is thrown by the burst of space it allows her. Her hair, fallen loose of its braids, flutters behind her and the cloak catches blue and purple and pink in the light where it’s painted over her body like a catsuit. She looks dangerous.

“Ugh- I don’t even know where I’m fucking going,” she snaps, throwing Thor a very accusatory look over her shoulder. He’s not often seen her angry, and even less so directed at him. She’s tiny but fierce - Thor has seen her sharpen her claws of lesser men. He knows he shouldn’t find it so attractive, at least not at this moment when she’s so very rothe with him. But fool that he is, forever and always -he does.

“Second left,” he suggests, daring to fall in step beside her. Her wrath has a pulse, a life to its fire. She is radiant; Thor will love this about her too, as all else. “Just through here.”

It’s an alcove, not a door, half-blocked by a statue of Dorette the Bloody. Darcy eyes it speculatively but follows when he steps through ahead of her. “There are a number of hidden paths in the palace. Most for servants, but not a few for quick escapes.”

“Would have been nice to find some nice little hidden path when I was flung naked across the fucking cosmos,” she offers, very, very lightly. Deadpan and satire Darcy has in droves, but it’s her jovial, airy tone that frightens him most. “Ya know. Just a thought.” She has daggers in her eyes, and Thor has an itch between his shoulder blades exactly where a knife would fit.

He hates it - that he forced her to parade herself for all the worlds to see. He is a moth to her flame, but it is her flame, not his to expose. He hates that she’s angry with him. That she came here - to his home - under duress when he had hoped... He wants her to love Asgard as he loves Earth. He’s afraid she might never, now.

The narrow corridor was high, and the raised path is lit with bioluminescent blue algae, where it ran in criss crossing rivers between the cobbled stones and grout. As a child, Thor had kept a small, crystal decanter of it on his bedside as a child, like a tiny nightlight. Loki had given it to him. He catches Darcy by the hand and marvels at the milk-white color of her skin, cast in all the shades of a cerulean sky. “I am sorry,” he says, understanding for the first time, how solemnity calls for quiet. “But you are strong and brave and fearless. And I could not have you seen as anything else.”
“So you made me walk naked---”

“Come unto your Kingdom as you are,” Thor recited from the book of Courtly Leadership his mother would snap at them from. “And too, they shall follow as you lead. I would not have them see their future queen fumbling to cover herself, to hide, to cower in any way. I know what it cost, Darcy, and I am sorry that I demanded you pay the price. But I also knew - you do not deserve the doubt any fumbling would plant. Nor did you deserve to be ripped away from your planet to mine, without so much as a word of warning.” That---That had been Thor’s fault, and he would admit as much, but not now. He hadn’t needed to grab onto her. He could have allowed the bridge to simply take him alone. But in those moments as the sun set on his father’s life - he had let himself fall selfish once more, and Darcy paid the cost.

“But can you tell me Darcy Lewis - if I had warned you, what choice would have you? What different choice? I think you would have raised your head and shed your fear and walked through the city of Asgard bare, with your head held high.” He crowded her against the cool, stone wall. “What say you, Princess? Would you have fumbled, if I told you all were looking to see you tremble? Or would you have proven them wrong?”

“Fuck you.” She glowers, and Thor knows he has the right of it. It was cruelly done, to thrust her out across the bifrost without so much as a word, but even had he spoken - she’d have made the same choice. He’d made it for her, and thus was where her anger lay, rightly.

“You looked at me with fearful eyes, and you prayed, Princess. You called to me; I heard your cries and answered you. And when you heard me,” Thor whispered, cupping her fair cheek in a single hand. “You listened.” He touched her heart with the palm of his hand, and found her so small beneath the crush of him - he covered the whole of her chest, fingertips creasing to wrap just so around her throat. She fluttered like a bird, and he felt those wings take flight inside him - such a beautiful shade of faith the world had never known. “Not with your ears - but with your heart. I felt it. I’ve never felt you more, within me. With you, I know divinity. With you, I know what it is to find a temple heart, where faith breathes new life into me.” With his hand firmly against her chest - he let her flutter, trembling and silent for one last moment, before folding to his knees. He wrapped his arms around her hips, and pressed his face to her flattened stomach, kissing until a tiny, breathless laugh escaped her. “I am sorry, Princess, for the indignities forced upon you in my name, but I promise you-you shall be rewarded for your faith.”

Darcy laid her hand in his hair, and let him have his fill of staring up at her on bended knee. “It was shitty.” She minced no words, and Thor appreciated that. “It sucked. I hated it. And I’m pissed that this is how I made my grand entrance on your Planet. I’m mad you didn’t warn me I was----” She shakes her head. “Did you know they were going to do the...Did you know---Thor, did you know they think I’m going to be there----”
“Queen?” He turns his head to nip at her hand. “I knew they were frustrated with my departure from Jane. I knew that an arrangement would be suggested; possibly manifested in my absence and foisted upon me with very little warning.” And indeed, that is what Loki had done, Thor realized, when he’d made the passing comment he’d sent the potential arrangements away. “I knew my father would begin such preparations, but also adhere to my Mothers precept that we are let to marry for love, should we choose. So I suppose - I certainly should have known, and I failed you in that too, Princess.”

She would be Princess here on Asgard - by all.

“I don’t want to look foolish,” she stressed, tilting her head back to look up at the arched ceilings. The frescoes here were painted in shades to compliment the bioluminay lighting - cool greys and warm greens.

“I know,” Thor assured her because he did. He knew the heart of her, and the way it called to him. And when she had prayed to him - his heart had answered. But love - Godly and otherwise - was not always a soft thing, gently done. “That’s why---”

“I know,” she cut him off, sighing loud and long. It was a good sound, Thor thought - a concession made, a fire dampened. She was mad, but she understood, and Thor would do his best to deserve such compromise. “I know, and that’s why I’m...I mean, I’m mad, but I get that you were thinking of me. I just...I think we might have different ideas as to what looks foolish, Thor.”

And given his penchant for foolishness, Thor knew that to be true. “Your---your nudity,” he said carefully, but the word nude sounded somewhat more sordid than bare. “There has always been an essence of divinity in the naked state. To present oneself as they are - no decoration or dressing. No hidden veil, no secrets, only that which the cosmos gave you. My people will be humbled by the honesty in your form; it is like, they will even emulate it. I know it is not the way on Midgard- and they know too. They will be humbled and inspired by your willingness to embrace Asgardian culture. You spoke on this, at your dinner. There is nothing so much an olive branch or offer of peace.”

She looked down at him, a faint but familiar smile curling at the corners of her generous mouth. “You calling me a hypocrite, Thor?”

“Never,” he swore to her, pressing another kiss to her belly. She smelled like petrichor, like ozone and rain, all familiar scents that reminded Thor of a coming storm. That was what she was - Darcy Lewis. “I am saying - this is what you were made for.”

“You prefer me naked,” she argued, but the stiffness of her body gave way to something giving, something he would not mistake for anything but forgiving. “Bias.”
“Darling,” Thor thought perhaps it was safe to tease now, with her fingers tangled gently in his hair. “The whole of the Nine Realms prefers you naked.”

“I can’t believe there are like - actual fucking paintings and statues of me. That is insane.” Her fingers moved to scratch at his scruff. “I didn’t need any of this, you know. I don’t--- Being Queen? Being...idolized. This wasn’t what I wanted.”

“I am sorry.”

“No---No, that’s not what I meant.” She touched his mouth with the pad of her thumb, and Thor kissed it. “I just meant...my faith in you was never about anything else. I only...” She seemed frustrated with her own mouth, with the way she could not find the words and Thor understood visceral. “I’d believe in you, if you were just a man. A mortal. A Midgardian,” she added, with a little laugh. “Because the best things about you - have nothing to do with you being a God, or Prince or a Hero. You’re just... good.”

“I want to be.” When he’d laid in her bed, wondering who he was, what he was without the crown, or the cape or the hammer...he had felt so empty. But Darcy had given it a name, a shape and a path. She had called to her people - and what was he, but her people - to be what they desire in the world, and what truly made a hero, but the desire for good? Cast aside the titles, and be a good person, above all else. All else would follow; a good King, a good God, a hero.

“Your dads kind of a dick.”

Thor laughed, the sound of it muffled against her stomach. “Would you believe me if I told you - he seems positively delighted, as of late.”

“Fuckin’ weird.” She pulled at his shoulders, urging him to stand. “Come on, come on. We can’t hide forever. I’m guessing - there’s people out there somewhere looking to boss you around.”

“Yes,” Thor sighed, rising to stand. He paused just long enough to press a deep, biting kiss against her mouth. “They’ll want a debriefing on my current time on Midgard, and tonight, they’ll be a dinner in my honor. Your honor, actually, I would guess.”

“I’m not that special.” Darcy looked distressed at the idea that she would be so celebrated. Thor
wished he could soothe her, but in truth - she did not yet know the whole of it.

He took her hand and pulled her along the paths. What could he say, to make her understand? That she was the first prayer heard in almost a thousand years? That she was the first acolyte to raise an altar in perfect supplication. Others had prayed, others had made sacrifices, but they were a flies wings buzzing against the wind. They did not come with whole, and unwavering faith. Doubt clouded minds, and sullied hearts, but Darcy Lewis believed and inspired that belief in others. Darcy Lewis was the first Priestess of the Temple Thor - ever. Belief had fallen out of favor almost as Thor had come into his Blessings. He’d never had the benefit of finding himself so faithfully served. There were the Acolytes of Asgard, but they were different. Older, and cemented in the faith of the Realms, and not the Gods. It was different. She was different. The Stars had heard her prayer and answered. The Stars had written her name across the sky. “You’re everything to me,” he said, instead. It wasn’t enough.

“We’ve only just---” She shook her head. “You were with Jane...not even six months ago. And now they’re calling me Princess on Asgard. It’s... I mean, I don’t know what to do with that.”

“Do you wish to revoke your pledge?”

“Of course not!” Her protest was instant, and sure and Thor clung a little harder to her hand in his. “Of course not. But it’s--- It’s a lot, Thor. It’s a lot. To think about. I’m not sure I’m what Asgard expects.”

“Oh I’m sure you’re not,” Thor agreed readily, turning a corner, and passing two doors. The third spilled out into his own quarters, the parlor fires lit and ready. “You’re a great deal more.”

“I didn’t...I never wanted to get married. To anyone.” Her words are somewhat preoccupied, as she twists and turns to take in the new room. Thors rooms are wide, and grand, with echoing high ceilings. They’d built it right into the highest turret of the palace. “How---How did we get up here? We weren’t on any kind of incline. How did we---”

“That particular corridor has a portal,” Thor explained, wondering if she’d understand the concept. They had no such things readily available on Midgard, though Thor had seen the theories of such in video games, and movies. “Just through the door. It’s a---”

“I know what a portal is.” She raised a hand, a single finger, not pointing but demanding he wait. “That. That right there. I mean I know what a fucking portal is, but holy shit. Portal. I can’t be Queen of Asgard, Thor. I only learned to drive like four years ago. Jane made me. I can’t be the Ignorant Midgardian Queen.”
“So learn. You are good at it.” He caught her fretting hands once more into his own. “Darcy, you are wise. And you have much to teach people. Now tell me why you object to marriage.”

“There’s so many elements of ownership. You have to—I don’t know. Sacrifice your independence to declare your commitment to another person. You’re not one single person anymore, you’re just half of something else. Marriage is like—”

“You are already devoted to me,” he noted, as mildly as he could muster. “You gave yourself unto thee, on your own raised alter, and bound us in blood and body.”

“You trying to tell me we’re already married?”

“I am saying—” Yes, perhaps, they already were. “What I mean to say is that the commitment we’ve made already - it surpasses that of a marriage, don’t you think? I do not own you, but you kneel at my feet regardless. Do you feel as if your sacrifice was made in vain? Do you feel as if you are less for it?”

“No but that’s---That’s different.” She bit her lip, and frowned at him. “That’s...I don’t know. It’s just different.”

“I never saw anything but a forever, when at last I let myself have you,” Thor admitted, a little ruefully. “From the very beginning, which I suppose is foolish. I thought - even perhaps you came to me - that you’d make a fine Queen.”

“Could have mentioned that, buddy.” She patted his hand, letting her fingers linger over his own - a soft, and forgiving touch. “Because like I said - I kind of keep forgetting you’re a prince. And you know - that Princes get that upgrade, eventually.”

Thor fell across the fainting couch, the weight of the day grasping at his ankles. He took Darcy with him, settling him into her lap. “The cosmos have granted me time before any such upgrades, it would seem. I have not yet been made a King. You needn’t worry as to what measure of a Queen you’ll make for a very long time. And if...And if you decide you can’t...then you can’t. It’s a great thing to ask, and I’ll not spite you for your choice. You have a choice.”

“But you don’t. If not me - you’ll have to marry someone else.” Darcy looked at him, then, mouth small and eyes wide. “You’re young, but Asgard’s peace is tentative at best, right? A marriage
would make people feel better. More secure.”

“Yes.” And she doubted her own acumen. “I’ll have some level of choice. It is Frigga’s way. She loved my father, but there’s was a political match. She asked that her sons be spared such a trial, should they so desire. I would be encouraged to make a concession for a political marriage, but I would be given the option of choosing which political marriage.”

“And you’re cool with marrying me? We’ve been together for like - a fucking minute. A second. A nanosecond.”

Thor couldn’t picture his life without Darcy in it, not any more. “I never thought of such things with Jane,” he said instead, laughing a little to himself, his mouth pressed into Darcy’s wild hair. “Funny, that. I never pictured her my Queen. But I’ve always thought of you as made to rule. I’ll admit I hadn’t imagined you’d rule Asgard, but it does not sit wrong wit me. I’ve only ever wanted the best for my Kingdom. How could I think that might be anybody but you?”

“You romantic piece of shit.” Thor couldn’t help but jostle Darcy with his burst of laughter, bounding her lightly on his stomach. “Seriously. You fucking sap.”

“I love you,” he said plainly. “Will you be my Queen or not?”

“Fine.” She rolled her eyes. “Like I’d let anyone else have you. I would fucking stab someone for trying.”

It sent a little thrill through him, the jealous curl in her voice. “I am much admired here, Princess.”

“I’m aware,” she said, wry and dry. “You did come home smelling like a whore house, last time.” Thor blanched, and Darcy laughed. “Am I going to have to stab someone?”

Sif would not engage Darcy in any battle. They were friends. Indeed, Sif might actually stab Thor for any assumed slight against Darcy. “That union was to the benefit of Asgard,” he protested, with more bollocks than he deserved, if Darcy’s arched brow was anything to go by. “And too - it was arranged. My father sent her. I hadn’t intended to engage...but he was right to request that I invoke all the blessings demanded of me. Such joining is a rite of passage for the Spring Equinox.”

“So there isn’t some Asgardian or Goddess holding a torch for you somewhere in the castle? No
one’s going to be throwing me dirty looks?”

“Oh there’s a great many torches carried for me,” he told her, with a cheeky sort of grin. “It’s something of a sport on Asgard to try and get a child on with the God of Fertility.” What had Sif called them? Frothing, ovulating hordes?

“Don’t they know that’s sort of your thing? Ain’t no one getting a kid off you without you wanting it.”

“They know.” He winked. “But the fun is in the attempt.”

“You’re not endearing me to marry you at all right now, I hope you know.” She stabbed him in the stomach with one pointed finger. “You wanna know how many people I’ve fucked? It’s less than you, I’m sure. But do you want to know?”

His cheeky smile died a quick and frightening death. “As far as I’m concerned, you had a one off with Barton and that was it.”

“Huh. Forget Ian that fast? Ian, Clint, Dea---” Her words came out as nothing more than a squeaking muffle as Thor clasped his hand over her mouth.

“I’ll not mention mine if you don’t mention yours,” he promised her, very quickly. “My jests were in poor taste.”

“We’re adults, Thor.” Darcy shrugged, and the catsuit moved with her body in a very compelling way. She was straddling his stomach, thighs framing each side. She’d not lost them in her training, much to her begrudging. They were as soft and supple as ever. Thor grabbed them, because he could. “I didn’t expect you to come into this relationship pure as the driven snow. I’d heard too much about your sex life for that.”

“Jealous God,” Thor reminded her, letting his hands wander up her thighs to her hips to the nip in her waist. “I’ll never take another; I’ve no need for more when I have you. I’d just as like to forget we have any past we do not share.”

“Easy when you’re a thousand years old.” Darcy leaned down, and kissed his forehead. “My life is a summer vacation to you.”
And that was a painful truth he’d not yet come to terms with. There were options, but he suspected Darcy would not love them. Living beyond the lives of everything you knew and love. Watching your family live and die without you. It was a daunting thing. And if she didn’t want it - Thor would never force her. He’d take the fifty or so years he had left with her and cherish them. He’d watch her age, faded and frail, and love her until her last dying breath. He knew in his heart, the one he shared with her, that she was not yet ready to make such a choice and that perhaps - she never would be. It mightn’t ever be a choice she could bring herself to make.

“Mmm,” Thor said, casting aside such dire thoughts. “And does this summer vacation come with that little suit you wear to swim? The purple one with the strings. I found it very distracting.”

“Are you talking about the time we went to the---You were with Jane then!” She slapped his chest, and narrowed her eyes. “I can’t believe you.”

“A wandering isn’t a promise for a wandering heart. I’ve seen the way you look at Captain Rogers.” He raised his own brow, as if daring her to deny it. “Would it help to say that every time I found myself looking - I felt like an absolute wretch? Indeed the day that I---” It had not been so long ago, and yet - it felt like an eternity. “The day that Jane and I felt out. You appeared on the holoscreen. You were wearing this...this little chemise, with nothing beneath it. Your hair was a right mess, like you’d just taken a tumble in the hay and you were leer at me. I was already at this precept,” he admitted. “I was already restless, and ignored. Your attentions that day...Well, I’d forgotten what it was like to be wanted. You reminded me. And I felt...terrible.”

“I did spend like...an inordinate amount of time hitting on you though. I thought...I mean. It was safe. You were with Jane,” she laughed at that. “I didn’t have a chance.”

“It’s a bit of a faux pas here, to court multiple women of the same circle. To depart from Jane, and take up with you - it looks very bad on my part,” he admitted. “It’s disrespectful.”

“Hitting on your friends boyfriend in front of her is disrespectful, but look how much it stopped me,” Darcy waved her hand dismissively. “God. What was that night? I remember being super shitty because Jane missed her check in. I ended up---oh.” Her cheeks turned a brilliant shade of red, and Thor frowned. She hadn’t been wearing a bra - he recalled very vividly the shape of her body beneath her chemise. “You don’t want to know.”

“Probably not, but I’m compelled nonetheless. Go on Princess, I probably deserve it.” He didn’t want to know what had put the color in her cheeks or the tangles in her hair. But he also didn’t not want to know. Jealousy was a fickle beast who made fools of all.
“Mmm. No.” She shook her head, and pushed his shirt up so she could trace the lines of his abs. “I promised.”

“But I want to know,” he protested, though he wasn’t entirely sure he did.

“Noooo,” she sang, tracing the line of denim where it sat low on his stomach. “You really don’t.”

“Darcy.”

“Tell me who you slept with here,” she asked, throwing him a wink. “Introduce me. Is it someone I’ll have to see every day?”

Yes, most likely. Sif was part of Thor’s private entourage, after all. “Wait---and yours? Is it someone I have seen every day?”

“Don’t we have a debriefing, or something?” She rolled off him, nearly tripping as he scrambled to catch her legs before she could escape. “We should---”

“Darcy!”

“Yes, dear?” She looked down at him. “Yes, okay. Yes it was. But I’m not saying, if you’re not saying. You just gotta deal.”


“We’re not playing the guessing games,” she frowned. “You really think I had a one off with Captain America?” She pauses, frown morphing into something decidedly more devious and Thor curses himself for forgetting that Darcy is wiley, if nothing else. “You think I’d have only done him once? If I managed to get that boy in my bed, we’d probably still be in it. Have you seen his ass?”
He wasn’t going to even acknowledge that, thank you very much. She was goading him, and doing a good job of it. “You really won’t tell me?”

She shrugs again, and pushes the wild curls from her face. “Maybe it was the little hipster barista who puts whip cream in the bottom of my cup the way I like it. Maybe it was Dr. Cho’s assistant, Amanda - she’s got a real handsy bedside manner. Maybe it was Devin,” she says, plainly. “Security guy from the 43rd floor lobby. He likes 90’s punk music, and always shares his fries. I actually leave the tower sometimes, you know? My world’s bigger than just the Avengers. I know other people. I know people you’ve never even met. You gonna tell me who you got with here last time?”

“Do you truly wish to know?” It would be fair to tell her. Fair and terrible.

“No.” She bent down to adjust the the buckles on her boots, and Thor found himself looking down the cut of her catsuit, the faint hint of breasts pale against the black fabric. “Not really. Stop looking down my shirt,” she added, even as the material slithered and moved to cover what little chest had been exposed. He really did loathe her cloak. “Come on. Up, up! We can do the debriefing thing and then go find Sif and the Warriors Three.”

Perhaps, Thor thought ruefully, all kingdoms really were sustained on secrets. He would tell her should she desire to know, but not a moment sooner.

***

Debriefing on Asgard was nothing so much like that on Midgard. Thor placed his hand over the glowing, metallic bulb and thought very specifically of his time away. Such memories that he did not care to share would be accessed, such was the precept of the the orb - only that which is given freely. Darcy eyed it dubiously. “You better not be thinking about me naked. They’ve seen enough.”

Thor snorted. “They need only take a stroll through the gardens should they so desire.”

“Yeah and they’re all from before I worked my ass off to tone this shit up.” She patted her belly, and scowled. “Don’t think I’m not super pissed about that.”

“Goddess weep,” Thor reminded her, with a tone perhaps better suited for the bedroom. “As you are and were, Princess.”
“Do you have what you need,” Darcy asked Agnot, the Archivist, very politely.

Agnot, who was very, very old, smiled benignly. “Would the Princessa care to add to the Archives? Your book is new, and it’s pages are blank. What say you, the Story of Darcy Lewis?”

“I’d say that’s probably more than a debriefing.” Her hand hovered over the orb, but she did not touch it. “I’ll let you take down my history, but not to day. I don’t understand the science behind this thing yet, and I’m not about to spill all my dirty secrets for the Big Book of Asgardian Bedtime stories.”

Agnot smiled, the paper thin skin of her face wrinkling faintly at the corner of her mouth. “Very well, Princessa. I believe late Queen came to the Archives to write her stories after the birth of Prince Thor. We are patient. Your story will be written, regardless. The Weavers have already began the tapestry.”

“I was thinking like...in a few days, but okay.” Darcy nodded, taking everything in stride. “Did he think about me naked while he was feeling that ball up, or no?”

Agnot’s grey gaze glittered and Thor wished Darcy was not so smart. “It would seem that the newest chapter of the Midgardian Thor Cycle is a story of carnal love, Princessa. As I have seen - he would be hard pressed to think of much else.”

“We did other things!” Darcy flushed, but she was smiling and Thor thanked the Patron Saint of Writing Every Single Thing Down for Agnot of the Archives. “We built a bed.”

“You raised an altar,” Agnot corrected, turning her glittering gaze back to the orb. “And then...blessed it.”

“Okay fine, you’re right, we literally did nothing else.” Darcy threw up her hands. “Is this my legacy, Thor? Is this how I’m going to be remembered? The naked, short-lived Queen who---”

“Brought the King of Kings to bended knee,” Agnot noted, peering down her nose. “Yes, I think - that shall be your legacy.”

“I’m a prince,” Thor noted, feeling a little flushed himself. He’d done his best to be as chaste in his recounting of his times with Darcy as possible. They would not be left out - not the moments of note,
at least. The Altar and the Spring Summoning.

“So you are,” Agnot agreed, with a sage and wispy nod. “You’ve knelt as a Prince, but you’ll stand as a King. Be gone, Children. And be well Darcy Lewis - for you are written in the Stars now, and the Cosmos seem fond.”

Chapter End Notes

begrudgment isn't a word, but it's what I wanted.

I read an article a week or so back about how Norse Mythos are making a come back and people are worshiping the Gods again. Holla at ya girl, I hope it's one of my readers.
Darcy is met by Sif and the Warriors Three with great fanfare, their friendship forged in battle. They hoist her up onto their shoulders and parade her around, quite pleased to have known her before infamy stole her across the Stardust.

“They’ve stolen my girl,” Thor tells Sif, from where they stand near the arches of the corridor leading to the feast in the greater hall below.

Sif elbows him, hard, in the ribs. “Pity you,” she says, and Thor is reminded of their night together when she said much the same. “So it all worked out, it seems?”

“I didn’t pursue her if that’s what you ask.” He had been content to bask in his own melodrama and self-pity, had Darcy not taken control of them both. “She made a very compelling argument.”

“As it is meant to be I suppose.” Sif hums and watches as Fandral spins Darcy about. “All is as it should be, so the Weavers say. The King is pleased.”

“Suspiciously so,” Thor agrees. Loki is far too pleased with Darcy’s emergence into the Tales. And a pleased Loki is never a good thing.

“Does she know?” Sif tilts her head toward Darcy, who's laughing brightly as Hogun tosses her up into the air. “Not of the King. Of our evening? She is my friend, Thor. It was all well and fine when you had no understanding with her. But secrets rarely remain.”

“She knows there was someone.” Had not that very someone launched them into motion. “And she has taken it upon herself to even our score with a conquest of her own. I would say we are even, a friend for friend. She bed my battle brother Barton. And too - she does not want to know. I have asked, and she has answered.”
“Very well.” Sif doesn’t sound entirely pleased, though. “Are you ready, my Lord?”

Thor makes a face, can’t stop himself from the grumble that escapes him, as grated by the title Lord as she oft is Lady. How times had changed, he thought. He used to revel in such things. “If I must. Lead on, Lady Sif.”

She sticks her tongue out at him, but she whistles too, high and sharp. The Warriors Three ceased their play, setting Darcy to her feet with careful hands. “Warriors,” Sif called, waving an elegant hand out before her. “Lead on.”

“Wait,” Darcy grabbed Sif’s arm, a familiar touch that made Thor smile. “The fuck am I supposed to wear for this shit.”

“You could wear what you wore when you arrived,” Sif told her, slyly. “Thor always wears whatever he has on.” She eyes Darcy’s catsuit. “This is good.”

“I look like a Disney Villain,” Darcy comments, staring down at her own apparel as if she’s never seen it before. “Are you sure? I look---”

“You look dangerous,” Sif supplies. Sif, Thor realizes, is a great gift for Darcy. She can council here where Thor is blind, but then - that was always Sif’s way. “Powerful.”

“I was going to say small.”

“A knife can kill a man just as well as a sword.” Sif shakes her head and waves off Darcy’s concern more eloquently than Thor would have managed.

“Today's been a shit show, Sif.”

“Yes, I imagine so,” Sif patted Darcy's arm. “We have spirits? If I remember rightly, you can hold your drink.”

“I do like booze.” Darcy nodded, perhaps to herself, and slipped her arm into Thor's. “Let's do this.”
Sif took the fore, as Hogun and Fandral moved to open the doors. “Come. Your kingdom awaits.”

***

Trumpets sounded as they broke the line into the Great Hall, and the collective masses rose to stand and cheer them on once more. Thor, very much use to the prodigal fanfare, felt Darcy grow stiffer and smaller beside him. “A fine gift I’ve brought ye,” he called, earning him more whoops and cries. “Someone get the girl a drink!” He scooped Darcy and sat her on his shoulder, holding her secure with one firm hand clutched into her thigh.

Hands, many many hands, reached out baring cups but Thor took a proffered bottle of clear, sweet spirits and handed it up to Darcy who had not yet got her bearings back enough to scold him. “It tastes of apples,” he assured her loudly over the revelry. “Drink up, Princess. Show them how the Midgardians do it.”

“Gonna fucking murder you,” she told him, through a wide smile as she raised the bottle and earned herself a riot of cheerful bellows. Thor watched her tip the bottle back, spilling the sharp liquid down her throat without so much as a gasp and she did not stop, as the bottle drained in a spiral and the crowd began to sing her name.

“Let us celebrate,” Thor called, marching down the path between the tables as the patrons around them slammed their cups against the wood to a steady, rising beat. “Welcome her Asgard - my Princess...Your Queen!” She’d be wroth with him, and he’d deserve it rightly, but the kingdom did so love their celebration and Darcy deserved to be welcomed in the traditional way. She’d been blindsided, but Thor never doubted her promise of forever. She would be Queen, but to him, she would always be more.

Darcy drank deeper, draining the bottle and throwing it to the ground with a gasping, breathless another!

Loud, and rowdy, cheers echoed against the high glimmering walls of the Great Hall. Rows and rows of tables filled to bursting with the peerage of the realms - all nine of them come together to greet their future Queen. Darcy took it in good stride, smiling prettily and drinking very deeply into her cups.

“I am fucking drunk as shit,” she told Thor, with a glossy look to her gaze and a sloppy, slow smile.
Thor himself, having spent a great while drinking weak Earthen spirits, was feeling rather jovial himself. Around them, wine flowed freely, and joyous singing rang like bells and in some instances gongs. “Shit.”

“The mead here is a great deal more potent than such on Midgard. Indeed the grog has a bit more kick than your fond wines. You’re handling it well. Midgardian isn’t known for their tolerance.” He patted her hand and subtly held her upright with a hand around her waist. “Would you like a grape?” Food would probably help. If nothing else, it would give her stomach something besides spirits to spit up later.

“Yes, bitch, feed me grapes,” Darcy snickered, opening her mouth like a wee baby bird. She bit his fingertips and smirked when he pinched her chin. “Space grapes are the shit. Space wine is the shit. Shit.”

Thor laughed and touched her cheek with a gentle swipe of his thumb. “I’m glad you approve.” He hauled her into his lap, her thighs straddling his own, and offered her bread next.

“Mmm, my favorite throne.” She kissed his fingertips and let her head fall back on his shoulder, her loose waves spilling like a waterfall down her body. “We should drink more.”

Thor laughed but collected her goblet all the same. He found her liked her like this, slippery loose, with leavy sated limbs and easy smiles. “Are you very certain?”

“I’m already going to regret drinking this much,” she reasoned, lifting her head up just enough to look at him. “I might as well make it worth it.”

“I admire your perseverance.” He tipped the cup to her supple lips, spilling wine into her open mouth. She drank deeply, throat rolling as he fed her every last drop and Thor felt himself stir in the confines of his Midgardian attire.

“Indeed,” Loki said, appearing beside them in his Kings chair at the table. “Tis a fine balance between pain and pleasure, but so long as the worth remains the wealth....”

“Gotta make the juice worth the squeeze,” Darcy replied in kind, tilting her head to the side. “Thought the old people were all home, your Majesty.” Indeed, much of the elderly revelers had shaken their heads fondly some hours ago and left with their wits still about them.
Thor snickered into Darcy’s hair. “She’s right, Father. Such revelry is beyond you now, I thought. You’ve not been much for drinking in many years.”

Loki, who was poised to drink deep from a stein, frowned. “We haven’t had such a cause for celebration in many years. To name a Queen is a righteous thing, and to name one such as a new generation apocolyte is great indeed. All the cosmos will have felt her - I could see the magic on her skin as bright as any of our three suns. Now though - that is a curious cloak, isn’t it?”

“It was a gift,” Darcy explained, running a very lazy, drunken hand down her front, between her breasts. “From a friend.”

“From a menace, more like,” Thor argued in a grumble. “But it has its merits. Darcy’s belief is something to be coveted.”

“There was a time when you’d have lauded such things to the heavens above for all to hear. And now you cloak them. Curious, son. Very curious.”

“I understand the danger bred by want.” Oh, how he did, with dangerous Darcy perched in his lap, soft with wine and the heart of much longing. “Especially when what one desires is power.”

“Indeed,” Loki agreed, tipping a noble head at Thor. “Your time on Midgard has not been fruitless. I can admit that I thought the Eden planet had long since been spoiled by their own desires, but you bring proof otherwise.”

“They still worship you, on Earth.” Darcy turned in Thor’s arms, leaning heavily on the bend of his elbow for support. “A lot of people worship Odin, actually. But they’ve...ruined it, I suppose. They’ve stained it with these bastard views and ideas. Arianism, that’s what they call it. White supremacy bullshit. Do you know what I mean?”

“Aye,” Loki agreed, a frown pulling at his face. “And such beliefs are why we do not hear their calls. Prayers must be made with a faithful, pure heart. To cry divine in my name such segregation... How a realm can hack itself to pieces when there’s a whole cosmos of diversity is beyond me.”

“They don’t...really know about the cosmos though. They don’t believe yet. Not all of them. They believe in you, as much as they can - but so much of it’s wrong. In the stories, Heimdall was said to be the whitest of all the Gods and I’ll be damned if he isn’t one hot ass black man.” She rolled her shoulders in a simile of a shrug. “It’s like the Christian bible. It’s so bastardized it’s embarrassing.”
“Heimdallr was white,” Loki told her, with his father's familiar frown. “Pale as a ghost. Heimdall is him reborn and cast to a different stone. Skin is fleeting. It matters not. My son was blue when I found him.”

“Perhaps that’s a concept we could introduce more to Midgard,” Darcy said, with more thoughtfulness than her wine should have allowed. “Would solve about half their problems. Thor.”

He raised her empty glass to be filled, casting a not to the nearest unobtrusive servants lingering in the alcoves beyond them. “More?”

“You’re gonna have to carry me,” she laughed but watched with sloe eyes as the nearest servant filled her cup once more. “You too, though. Misery loves company.”

With his other hand, he drank too. “And who will carry me?”

“Hogun,” she declared, pointing a snappy finger at the warrior in question. “Hogun, stop drinking. You have to carry Thor later.”

Hogun, who could out drink many a man, raised his glass to that but he did not sip from the cup. “As my future Queen commands it.”

Darcy squinted at him, lifting her head up from Thor's chest just so. “Finish that one first though. It’d be rude not too.”

“Another, Princess?” Thor asked a full cup in hand. Darcy tipped her head back obediently, and Thor poured with a heavy hand. She did not stop, not to breath, not even when a trickle escaped the corner of her mouth and ran like a little river down her throat. Thor fed her it all, and she drank like a fine little supplicant until her cup ran dry. “Darling.”

“On Earth,” she said, in a heavy, syrupy voice that made him ache for her. “Wine is the blood of Christ - the prodigal son of God, did you know? His...His supplicants,” she explained, tasting the word in a way that made him sure it wasn’t her chosen description. “His supplicants kneel and drink the wine on his alter - that he might be within them. Or something. I prefer a more direct approach. Kneelings a bonus though.”
“You do, indeed,” Thor agreed, kissing her neck where wine had stained. She let herself remain limp in his grasp, head lolling back on his shoulder that he might kiss more of her skin. He tugged at her catsuit, and it revealed her unto him, just a little, bit by bit pale moonlight until the wealth of her breasts were bare to his touch. The wealth, but not all - her modesty would remain.

“And so we are all very, very drunk,” Darcy declared, drunker than the lot of them by far. “What do you do next to celebrate or whatever?”

“We fight!” Fandral declared, shoving his shoulder roughly into Volstagg.

“We fuck,” Sif supplied, with an arched brow and a sly look toward Loki who busied himself quickly with another glass of wine. “Thor prefers to fly.”

“Well he’s gonna have to settle for fighting or fucking,” Darcy said, with an airy, slurred laugh. “Because he didn’t bring his hammer.”

“What?”

“He didn’t bring his ----”

“That’s nonsense,” Loki waved his hand. “Thor is never without his hammer.”

Darcy righted herself the best she could, but Thor threw a hand around her belly to offer her some measure of support all the same. “Pretty sure it’s hanging off my coat rack back in New York, dude. Royal Dudeness. Highness. Majesty.”

“Is that true, son?” Loki stared at him, brow pulled together in great concentration. “You did not have it with you when you were summoned?”

“I haven’t felt...compelled,” Thor tried to explain, spirits slowing his own tongue. “To have it with me always, I mean to say. It does not call to me as it used too. And I have...I have called the Lightning without it now. Three times.”

“Interesting,” Loki’s voice was an echo, and nothing more. Thor could already see the wheels
turning in his wicked, wild mind. “Does war sing in your blood, my boy? Does the battle call to you? Perhaps your heart has chosen its threat. Have the Three Fates come to collect?”

“I can hear it,” Thor confirmed, for the righteous cry of battle was a constant, companion in his heart. “Loud and bright as ever. No, I would not say that this blessing means to leave me. Indeed, I can still call to my hammer, I can still feel the power in my palms. I simply...am not so compelled.”

“Thor is not the God of Hammers,” Darcy told them, familiar words on a sugar-sweet tongue. There was a light to her eyes that belied her liquored mouth.

“And what is he the God of, Princess?” Loki asked dryly, staring keenly at her over the rim of his own cup. “Thunderbolts and lightning?”

“Very, very frightening.” Darcy sang, leaning forward suddenly to take Loki’s cup. He let her, perhaps startled by the brashness. Indeed, the hall had fallen quiet - not silent, but hushed with murmurs and curious whispers. “Did you see the painting...the fresco...where I’m hung from Mjölnir? Have you all? That was the Spring Equinox on Earth. I brought Thor a heart, and we ate it together.”

“You ate the heart?” Loki’s voice was nigh a breathless whisper on Odin’s voice. “In the name of the Mother?”

“I did.” She spoke with quiet confidence and an echo of power Thor knew to be the heart of her spirit. “And we made an offering together on a different alter; the way you do here, for your Spring. And lightning struck me, and I was marked.” The liquid fabric of her cloak-catsuit melted away, revealing nothing she would deem immodest but exposing her fractal mark. “And through me, Thor was made stronger threefold.”

“How do you suppose threefold, child?” Loki held her gaze, captivated as the rest of them but on Odin’s face, he looked haunted. Somewhere, Agnot’s paper-skinned fingers were scrawling new tales in the archives. Somewhere, the stars were shifting to make room. This, the whisper of her voice and the shape of her words, smacked of prophecy.

“Because it’s happened three times.” Darcy shrugged and Thor felt himself grow both hot and cold all at once. “Right, Thor?”

“Nay, only twice.” The first time, and then the Spring summoning. Thor had felt it, through Darcy.
The call of something far greater than himself.

“Well yeah. The third time hasn’t happened yet. But it will, so it has.”

“You’ve felt two power shifts?” Loki was a statue in his chair beside them, and the elegant pose did not suit Odin’s body. “It should happen again. The girl is correct.”

“I didn’t understand it before.” Indeed, he did not quite understand it now, but Darcy spoke of something beyond them both, and such was the magic of Asgard, of Prophecy. He collected her back against his chest and wrapped her in his arms. “The golden thread of my fate split to three, but it was never about my gifts Father.”

“No?” Loki sat back, upright in his chair and his gaze shifted from Darcy’s slippery form to Thor. “What do you reckon?”

“I can’t say that I reckon anything,” Thor admitted, tucking Darcy beneath his chin. “But should the Mother come to me again - then I will know.”

“She will,” Darcy insisted, sounding sleep-slurred. Her cloak folded over her body like a blanket, and she snuggled herself down deeper into the bends of Thor’s arms.

“Darcy,” Loki asked, as gentle a voice as Thor had ever heard from his brother, and more so from Odin. “You said I came to in you a dream and spoke secrets into your ear.”

“Yeah,” Darcy agreed, leaning into Thor’s touch as he pushed stray curls from her face. “You told me to trust the man with two faces.”

“Did I?” Loki seemed frozen at that and Thor...Thor wondered what his father intended, whispering in Darcy’s ear on the Dreamers Plain. Whispering indeed, that she might trust Loki - for there was no denying who the man with two faces was. “Darcy...has the Mother ever spoken to you?”

Darcy opened her eyes, only a fraction, but her gaze was pale and nothing like her own. “Yes. She told me Thor wouldn’t need Mjölnir anymore.” She frowned. “I remember things I didn’t before. I think it’s this place. I remember dreams I never had.”
“Why?” Loki wheedled very gently. The festivants had fallen silent, nary a breath escaping them. “Did she say why?”

“I don’t remember,” Darcy admitted, a frown of discontent pulling at her mouth. “I don’t think Mortals are supposed to hear her.”

Thor held her tightly and shook his head. “Let her be,” he demanded. “Enough.” He was afraid. He was very much afraid. Afraid that what Stephen Strange said to him had come true; that perhaps Fate had found her at last, and laid a path on her behalf. Afraid, even more, of Agnot’s words that seemed innocent only hours ago but now pounded like a war drum in his head. That she was written in the stars now, and the cosmos seemed fond. “Let her be.”

“I can help you remember,” Loki held out his hand, palm upturned and open. “It won’t hurt.”

“Magic never hurts me,” Darcy told him, sounding so much like a tired child. But she slipped her hand into Loki’s and Thor...did not stop her.

Loki held Thor’s gaze, as he fluttered softly through Darcy’s mind and Thor could see it all - Loki granted him that much. His brother was not cold, nothing so serpentine, as he slid through the waves and colors that made her memories. Thor must have made a noise, must have let something free, for they stopped in the copse of trees, the night sky overhead a magnificent blue. Thunder shook the Earth and lightning cracked the sky. The Mother’s voice was not a sound, but a feeling. It spoke, very clearly, into their souls.

The heart of Mjölnir lay inside her.

Loki fell out of her memories in a tumble, taking Thor with him and when they came to their senses, the Great Hall was nothing short of a riot of whispers. They had all heard it - felt it - what the Mother had decreed. Darcy was a limp, sleeping form in his lap.

“She is well,” Loki assured him, Darcy’s hand still cupped in his own. “She is---- Thor. She is Mjölnir.”
BAM BITCHES. Tell me what you're thinking.

Thor don't need the hammer
Because Darcy IS the hammer.
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

This is another shorter chapter, sorry! I thought about continuing it, because I like my chapters at about 5000, but...sometimes the chapter ends itself at the right point and dragging it out is just reckless.

Hope you like.

And hey, if you need a little somethin' somethin' else, I wrote some Darcy/StephenStrange (inspired by this story) over in my fic, Darcy Does. Check that ouuuut.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Darcy was bent over a basin in the bathing quarters of their shared rooms, heaving the contents of her small belly. Thor dutifully held her hair and stroked her back, waiting for the riot to be over. “Oh fuck you,” she muttered, between sputters. “Alien space grapes even taste good coming back up, what is this magical fucking bullshit?”

“They’re less acidic,” Thor offered, though he suspected Darcy didn’t genuinely care about the science of Asgardian food. “Our second sun neutralizes many acids.” He falls silent as she wretches, using the time to consider the atmospheric differences between Midgard and Asgard. It would be good for you to spend some time outside today.”

“You can eat my whole ass if you think any direct sunlight is going to touch any part of me.” He’d figured as much as he’d dimmed the lights of the bathing chambers, leaving the gentle glow of the bio-luminescent algae light their way. She rested her head against the edge of the basin, which was less offensive to witness than watching her rest her head in a drunken stupor against the edge of a Misgrdrian public toilet (but that only happened once, and it was Jane who had, also drunkenly, held Darcy’s hair).”I’d rather rip out my own eyeballs ala Odin, than look in the general direction of any sun, let alone a second one.”

“Finish your heaving,” Thor told her robustly, leaning back to prop his legs up on the edge of the stone bathing pool. “I’ve a gift for you.”

Darcy raised her head, staring at him blearily through stilted eyes. “I’m finished. Also, my puke vanished and that’s sort of like...levels of mystic science bullshit I’m not fully prepared for.”

“It’s been sent to be ---” Thor shook his head. Midgardian sent their waste to the bowels of their own
city in a weird display of antiquated ingenuity. “Never mind. How’s your head?”

“If I stare at anything for longer than three seconds, I want to puke again.” She laid her head back down. “Why did I drink so much?”

“Step one of the Darcy Lewis Screw Your Troubles And Just Get Tanked Process Of Forgetting Everything’s Gone To Shit,” Thor recited dutifully, thumbing the stopper from the cool stone bottle in his palm. Similar procedures had been initiated on Midgard a number of times, especially during his time with Jane. “Sit up, Princess. Drink this.” She did, with loose, sluggish limbs. Thor tipped the vial to her soft, open mouth, cupping the back of her head, curls tangling about his fingers. He wiped away the crystal droplets that clung to her bottom lip. “How’s your head?” He asked again, with a smug sort of grin across his face.

“Fucking shit, I’m gonna be the Queen of that.” She blinked wildly, licking her lips and catching the tip of his thumb. “Holy shit, what the hell is that? It tastes like pure sugar but also I think I feel better than I did before I came here.”

“Expensive,” Thor admitted, setting the vial on the edge of the bathing pool so that he could better pull Darcy into his lap. She came willingly, spreading her thighs to make space for his own and wasting no time burying her face into his throat. “The alchemists long ago thought to create an alternative to the Golden Apple. They never succeeded but they did manage to create a very effective pain reliever. Indeed, it has curative properties as well, for some small ailments.” Loki had sent for it, claiming it wouldn’t do to have a foreign dignitary and future regent suffer during her stay. His gaze had been uncomfortably reverent and he had followed them even as Thor had cradled Darcy’s lax, sleeping body through the halls of the palace. Thor had half thought he’d insist on tucking her in himself, the way his hands had seemed to twitch at his side. He supposed though, that it was better Loki liked Darcy than found her wanting as he did most Midgardians. Still - it made him greatly uncomfortable to see his brother gaze down upon Darcy with Odin’s eyes and misplaced reverence.

Had the world ever been how Thor had imagined it might have been - he and Loki side by side always - there was a significant chance his brother would have met Darcy as Thor met Jane. He’d have liked Darcy (who was chaos in her own right) and worse - Darcy would have found his wicked ways desirable. Thor felt uncomfortably violent at the thought.

Jealous God.

“God I don’t even have hangover mouth. Everything just tastes like sugar.” Her breath was hot against his neck, and Thor couldn’t stop his fingers from clenching around the curve of her hips. She was still covered, dressed in that damnable cloak. “Mmm. Handsy. Miss me?”

“My body never feels at home until it is joined with yours.” He smoothed away her hair, baring her
shoulder that he might kiss it. “Having you perched in my lap for hours, all eyes upon you as you used me like a throne... put a burn in me, I will admit.” The salt of her skin reminded him of the seaside cliffs of Norway and Thor...wanted her in a simple way. As a man longs for a woman. Love to lover. “Have a bath with me.”

“You just want to get me naked.”

“Oh I want a great deal more than that,” he assured her, tugging at the collar of her cloak until it went loose, unfolding from her body elegantly. He pushed to his knees, pulling her up with him. “The council will not convene for three days. I believe my father’s intent was that you might tour the realm.”

“Starting with Asgardian indoor plumbing?”

“Something like that.” Thor smiled, setting her to perch on the edge of the bathing pool. He pressed his hand down on a cool, blue stone and the water rose from the bottom up, long ago set to suit him. He made a show of peeling of his clothes for her, basking in her heated gaze. He took his time, folding the thin cotton Migardian shirt over the edge of the bench. He drew the zip slowly down his denim, watching the corner of Darcy’s mouth curl.

“You’re teasing me,” she accused him, reaching out to tuck her fingers into the waistband of his trousers. Thor pushed them down his hips, drawing her hand lower. “Take your fucking clothes off and get in here.”

He obeyed.

The water rippled, but remained level as they lowered themselves beneath the surface. Midgardian water displacement had frankly baffled Thor, so old a concept he hadn’t realized it was an issue that even existed. Thor reached around her to press another stone, and a light warm rain began to fall down around them, gentler than the Midgardian showers (of which he quite favored). He thought she looked particularly ethereal in the rising mist, soft blue light playing over her pale body like something out of a dream. “I love you,” he said, apropos of nothing else. It just seems the thing to say.

“Well I’d fucking hope so. Darcy sank down low enough that her chin dips the water and the ends of her curls float like dark rose petals over the surface. “Since your dad asked me to marry you and all.”
It caught him up short, and he startled in the water. “That isn’t--- No. That’s not---” Except that is very much how it happened. “Midgardian customs would have me ask your father to marry you,” he noted, with a little amusement.

“Tony’s given you as much a blessing as he’ll ever manage,” Darcys snorted, and she glided through the water across the pool to press her body against his own. “Ask him if you can marry me, and see what he does.” He made space for her between his thighs, pulling her to perch on the left, her full breasts rising from the water in a spectacularly distracting manner. “I love you too.”

Something was different, he noticed, as their bodies came to join. No less spark, no less heat - but the difference was palpable. He took her gently, her body crushed to his. She held tight, a hand around his neck, fingers biting softly between his shoulder blades. Her other hand cupped his face, tangling in his beard and he couldn’t look away from her as her body makes space for his.

They shared the breath between them, their skin made warm by water and mist and her body moved above him in a dance they’ve only just learned but seem to know to the bone. He held fast, while she rose and fell, her eyes closed and her mouth open. Thor did not close his eyes; he watched all. The water rained upon them, a tender caress and he felt embarrassingly cherished in the moment. He felt small in a way that wasn’t bad, but comforting. There were so many ways to worship, he thought, holding her closer, pained by any space between them, any skin that doesn’t kiss. She let him, for all that it made the roll of her hips more difficult. Her thighs flexed where he gripped them, the ride of her body strained by the strength of his arms but she did not stop - his warrior girl. Pleasure filled him, not a tidal wave but a running river and he pressed his forehead to hers. “I never thought anything I should not need to fight for was worth having,” he told her, feeling especially breathless. “But the shape of us comes so easily.” Loving her was easy, having her was easy. They came together like the stars made constellations.

Gently, softly, tenderly - he lifted her, wading through the pool to where the water grows deeper. He perched her on the edge of the stone, never leaving his place between her thighs and he took the battle from her body unto his own, crashing his hips against her. Her hand still held his face and when he pressed his mouth to hers, he could feel her lips move in silent prayer. The pleasure that unfolded within him did not burn brightest where they joined - it was everywhere. Cresting and colliding and his breath caught, stuttering across her open mouth. “Darcy,” he found himself muttering, as he trailed kisses across her her cheek, and down her neck. “Princess.”

‘M’here,” she promised him, her biting nails slipping from his skin to bury themselves in his hair and hold him tight. ‘M’here.” And she was, wrapped around him on Asgard in the quarters he’d kept since he was but a boy. It’s a wild thought, one that makes his hips stutter. She was here, in his arms, in his home. Gracing his hearth with her warmth. “God, Thor,” she cried, when he pressed deeper, scrambling to be closer, to be as much one as he could manage. His hands grabbed too hard and he knew that she’d bruise. That she’d show him later, and press her little fingertips to ever purpling mark just to feel that phantom ache. It makes his balls tighten, and his heart pound and he can’t help the strength that escapes him. He loved her so much it hurt and something inside of him called for her to feel it. “Fuck,” she gasped, head tipping back. “Fuck---please.” His fingers tangle in her hair,
pulling her neck taught and catching her breath in her throat. Her body flutters, easy for him, and he feels the apex of her pleasure spear him like a sword point. “My God.”

When the last of his own shuddering pleasure has escaped him and he was left folded over her small, trembling body, mouth pressed against her throat, Thor opened his eyes. Through the curtain of her loose, damp curls he saw....

Loki.

The reflection of Loki in the mirror wall beyond Darcy. Loki, not the facsimile of Odin, and Thor was struck with the eerie sensation that he should not be able to see his brother. Loki was more than capable of fading into invisibility. Thor should not have been able to see Loki watching them. He kept his face hidden in Darcy’s hair as he watched Loki’s bright, narrowed gaze. Darcy stroked his back, sweet palms warm against his skin. She turned her face to kiss his hair and Loki vanished in the mirror.

He tended to her after their bath, feeling sated in a way beyond sexual release. He felt calmer, somehow, caring for her. He dried her body with soft, warm towels, and braided her hair down her back. She bore it all with sweet amusement, even letting him help her into his own robe. “You’re being weird.”

“I feel weird,” he admitted, pulling her close. Keeping her close. The notion that Loki had seen her... It wasn’t the same as her body bared for all of Asgard to see, for the statues and the frescoes. It wasn’t the same. Loki had seen her in a state meant only for Thor - a tender moment between them. He wished he could claim such things were taboo, like the unspoken rules of Midgard. But they weren’t. Odin himself might have demanded to watch their coupling. As a Fertility God, such displays were normal, expected even. Encouraged, certainly. In fact, Thor wondered at how receptive Darcy might be to such a thing (highly unlikely). He doubted it would be long before it was suggested (demanded, but never overtly, demanded but in a way that remained judicious). He could claim such ceremonial coupling to be against Midgardian code, and beg off for her benefit but as a Fertility God...it would not be out of the realm of Asgardian acceptability that he be asked to take another for display. That too, he thought, would offend her Midgardian sensibilities (and indeed, he did not feel compelled to take another lover, for all that it was acceptable on Asgard. Darcy was enough; more than enough. He needed nothing else. To beg more would sully her blessing).

But Loki had not come to him with demands. He had not come with suggestions. He had not come with sly, manipulative words, blackmail or threats. The nature of Loki watching them, hidden as he thought he was, made it all the more unctuous. It tarnished Asgardian and Midgardian custom all at once. It put Thor’s teeth on edge.
“Thor,” Darcy said, standing behind him on the bench in his sleeping quarters. She worked the tangles from his hair with nimble finger, nails scratching pleasantly at his scalp. “When the BiFrost came through the window at the Tower...”

He winced. Not a fine moment, all things considered. Heimdall was usually more respectful, but then...He was most likely struck by his own grief of the moment, as Thor had been. “Yes?”

She moved against him, breasts flush against his back, and pressed her mouth to his damp hair. “You said...your father had died.” Thor tensed, a shudder running through him that shook her too. “Thor.”

“Darcy,” he murmured, reaching across his own body to take her hand where it rested on his shoulder. “To speak it...”

“The man with two faces,” she whispered, fingers tangling in his own. “Is your father really dead?”

“Yes, I felt his passing.” But not his power, which was concerning. “He is gone from this world, and all others. Valhalla has him now.” And his mother, he thought, with a small sense of peace.

“The man with two faces,” she said again, and he can feel her frown. “It’s...whoever’s pretending to be your father? And you knew?”

“Yes,” he said again, feeling foolish for the word. “But to put it to words is to risk...everything, Darcy. I cannot say it. And you mustn’t either. It is dangerous. Even now the secret maintains a tentative balance. If my father - my real father,” he emphasizes. ”If he came to you in a dream and bid you trust this King... I would have you trust him. And me.”

“Of course I trust you,” she murmured, kissing his hair again. “I just...Are you okay?”

He wasn’t certain, to be sure. He could not allow his grief to sink it’s claws into his soul. Not when he must maintain the farce Loki had so cleverly fabricated. His father was better now, in the place Beyond, in the arms of his mother. It was as it should be, for all that nothing else was. Thor could not take the throne, not without the Blessing. And so, Loki would remain. “I don’t know,” he told her honestly, because she would never use such a thing to hurt him. “But my grief must remain a whisper, that much I know.”
She wrapped her arms around him, and held fast in her embrace. “You’ve just...you’ve lost so much. Your mother. Your brother - I know you loved him, even after everything. And now your dad. And you have too...You have to fucking pretend to just...be fine? It’s fucking me up a little bit,” she admitted.

“I have to be strong.” He tipped his head back, resting against her chest. “For my Kingdom. For...for everything. I must remain.”

“Well I’m here for you,” she said, like it was nothing for her to be here, with him. Like he hadn’t know he would need her to manage. Like he hadn’t grasped on to her with both hands as the Bifrost took hold. She said it like it was nothing at all, that she was here, for him.

Thor was certain it was everything.

Chapter End Notes

dont forget to check out the new chapter of Darcy Does!

Darcy Does....Stephen Strange

(I know y'all were asking for it after the Strange chapters haha)

also, because this chapter was shorter than anticipated...y'all might be getting a few more than expected.
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

I have planned this specific scene since before I'd written them finally getting their shit together. I can't write a world where Darcy isn't a fucking BAMF.

think I finally got my shit together with the tenses as well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A procession followed them to the city’s foot holdings and market, and Thor could tell it put Darcy’s shoulders on edge. For all that she was comfortable in a crowd, having managed the Avengers crowds a number of times, she was not content with such grand attention.

The commoners delighted in her presence, having been told she was common-born on Midgard. They tossed flowers petals her way in pinks, and yellows and blues, and Darcy smiled at the gesture, pretty, gracious, and pink-cheeked. Loki had managed to position her ahead of them, at the fore of their parade, with a cluster of women who Thor assumed were appointed ladies-in-waiting. Sif was among them, to his great joy. She and Darcy spoke quietly, all grins and shared laughter. They stood out together too, Sif in her polished armor and Darcy in her sleek, black catsuit. The other ladies wore dresses in spring pastels, long skirts swaying in the new day breeze, their hair done in elaborate coifs and pins.

“She is not as I expected of you, my boy. A lively girl, to be sure, but she does not seem so starry-eyed, nor is she particularly insipid. I almost like her.”

Almost. Thor must give credit to Loki - when not directly in Darcy’s presence, he played the part of their father very well. “Neither was Jane and you referred to her like a goat.”

Loki ignored the latter part of Thor’s statement with a soft, thoughtful hum. “Fair enough; prior to Midgard, you never valued mind over matter in your youth. I will attest to your bespoken growth in this if nothing else. Even so; the Lady Darcy is not like Jane Foster. Is she smart?”

“Worse,” Thor told him, with a wry sort of smile. “She’s clever as well as intelligent. I often find myself thinking Loki would have found her very intriguing.”

“Oh?” Odin’s voice did not shift, but Thor thought he heard the change all the same. “Perhaps that is best not spoken. It would do her reputation no good. And I’m certain she wouldn’t care for the
suggestion. He slaughtered a number of her people.”

“No less than her own people do every day, though I’ll concede to your point.” Thor watched her ass in her beloved cloak-catsuit as she crouched to tuck a flower behind the ear of a little girl. “Very recently though, I found myself thinking...had Loki and I been sent to Earth together... There would have been none of the bloodsheds, and he’d have met Darcy first. A fine pair they’d have made too; Darcy is at heart, chaos in her own right. In fact, I find that the better part of her charms.” He turned his head, just a little, and considered Loki’s pained expression. “In another star story, past or future, Darcy could have been Loki’s bride. Imagine if the first God to find worship had been he?”

“It’s all he ever wanted,” Loki-Odin said, in a voice uncharacteristic of them both. “Never mind. She is your bride, and your star has found new life. I was worried you would never find your path and it seems, it has found you.”

“In spite of my blindness,” Thor admitted. He frowned at the fore, where a stall keeper was having low words with Darcy. Her ladies seemed upset, though Sif was clearly amused. “What’s this? Who is that man?”

“Should we intervene?” Loki suggested, stepping forward. Thor put his hand on his father’s arm, eyes narrowed Darcy’s way. As Darcy made to leave, the stall keeper put his hands on her, smacking Darcy firmly on the ass. Thor felt the lightning shake him, and too - Loki fairly pulsed beside him. “How dare---”

“Wait,” Thor said roughly, though it went against the greater part of him. “Wait.”

Loki bristled, the magic rising inside and crackling over his skin. “This man has put hands on your--”

“On a woman very much capable of handling herself. She’ll not thank either of us for the intervention. Watch.” Darcy already had the man by his beard. “You’ll like it, I think.”

She trained with Barton, and the lady Natasha very regularly, Thor knew this. He watched, at times, enamored by her small, powerful body in all ways. This was no different than those times, except this man did not know her for such skills.

The stall-keeper grabbed her wrist, and Darcy laughed, kicking him hard in the knee until he buckled and he released her. Her gravity boots, Thor realized, gave her unprecedented strength on Asgard;
the power of her kick was surely greater if the state of the stall-keeper’s kneecap could be trusted. She drove her elbow into his face when he lurched forward to balance himself and grabbed his head in a lock around his throat with both her arms. He was bigger, and a fair deal stronger, but he was not faster. When he stood, she went with him, hanging from his neck in a relentless hold. She swung herself around in the style of Natasha, legs braced around the poor man’s neck. Thor watched as the man went red in the face, and knew himself the power of her strong thighs.

Tiny Darcy moved like the spider who taught her, and such a style of combat was unexpected. She did not have Natasha’s years of experience, latent elegance for it or even her lithe, lean form, but she had surprise on her side and a wealth of delicate strength. Darcy brought him to the ground, face down in the mud. She stumbled off his shoulders as he pushed himself back up, but did not fall, shaking her head at Sif’s offered hand and rubbing both her own hands together. Thor’s borrowed lightning lit up between her gauntlets, palms crackling with borrowed power.

Thor thought, at that moment, he’d give her it all just to see her like this. She looked beautiful and wild, her face flushed and her eyes narrowed. She raised both palms just as he reached her, just as Tony had demanded she practiced. White bolts arched from her gauntlets, and threw the stall-keeper backward with a violent crackle, smashing his body against his own fruit stand. Darcy kicked him square across the face when he moved to push himself up once more, and at last - he did not move to rise again. She crouched again, the fine curves of her body looking deliciously violent and beautiful, and Thor was close enough to hear her now.

“Hey, if I’m not kicking your ass hard enough to keep you down, I can always call my boyfriend over,” she told him, a half-smile pulled across her mouth. “Here he is now. He looks mad.”

The stall-keeper scrambled back in the mud, on hands and knees, very nearly knocking Darcy over. He looked a little dazed, nose broken and mouth bleeding. His hair, Thor noted, was standing quite on end with static.

“Princess.” She took his hand and allowed him the very chivalrous act of helping her stand, though he suspected she did not need the aid. “May I?”

“You may have what is left,” Darcy told him, imperiously, making a show of dusting her hands off. The gauntlets crackled, relentless static building between them like a promise. Darcy needed no warning, though, not anymore. “All yours. Go to town.”

He had a mind to be gentle. Darcy had done her part well, after all. He would not usurp her own battles, so long as he could help himself. He picked the man up by his hair and held him at the tips of his toes. “The Princess has done quite a number on you it seems, but a man must have his pride. I trust you know who I am?”
“Your highness,” the stall-keeper hissed between bloody teeth. “I did not know---”

“He’s marked her,” Loki all but growled, touching Darcy’s face gently, turning it for inspection. A bruise had, indeed, began to form there, faintly pink and purple. “I’ll have him executed,” he decided, and Darcy sputtered even as the crowd cheered righteously around them. It would seem, Thor realized with no small amusement, that Darcy was already well loved among his people.

“Uh - No. He smacked my ass, he didn’t---” Darcy shook her head, gently extricating herself from Loki’s grip. “That seems extreme. I tazed him with Thor’s own white-lightning smack down. We’re good. We’re cool.”

“You’re a Princess,” Loki insisted, looking a hairs-breath too wild for Thor’s liking. “This man has made his mistake, and he will pay. Thor, I would have you make her see reason.”

Thor winced. “Oh, Father. No .”

“ Make me see---”

“You are an only child,” Thor said suddenly before Darcy could work herself up into a rightful rage. “I can see it in your blood. What say you, man? What is your name?”

“Deidreth,” the man managed to sputter, hands grappling at Thor’s wrist faintly. “Of the Fields. I came down from the valley groves only this morning. I did not know she was your chosen one.”

“I could strike your lands barren for thinking it fine to put your hands on any woman in such a way,” Thor told him, very casually, as he shook the man with every word. “Such disrespect may have been tolerated in the past, but my Mother, Goddess of the Hearth ended it a long time ago. It’s poor luck on your part you put your hands on my wife.” Whoops , Thor thought. She wasn’t his wife, not yet. “And so, Only Child of the Fields - no babe shall be gotten of your seed. Your bloodline shall die with you.”

“See, even that seems kind of extreme,” Darcy insisted, although much more mildly. She was smiling his way, a small little thing meant just for him. “Dammit, you know I love it when you go all Fertility God.”
Thor threw the man to the ground, feeling very pleased with himself. She did love it; Thor could feel it in his heart and else alike, that thrum that filled her and called to him. Pity they were standing in the market square. The sight of her laying out a grown Asgardian with naught but her own hands and the gift of his lightning had already left him in a state. “You already bested him with my - how did you put it? White lightning smack down? Any more would be in poor taste. This is surely more fitting. I’m more than the God of Lightning after all.”

“You really are.” Darcy met him in the middle, and Thor forgot they were standing in the market with the greater part of the common people watching them. He kissed her soundly, fingers tangling in her braid. Darcy pulled away breathlessly.

“Your Highness,” she said, and for a moment Thor thought she’d addressed him as such, but she was already turning to Loki. “Can I ask that you don’t do whatever you’re thinking about. Can I ask that? As a Princess? I’m happy with this, as it is. Let him be a warning to others if nothing else.” She paused, gaze fluttering to the stall-keeper who had the good sense to remain down. She turned back to Loki, her gaze considering. Thor knew what the purse of her mouth meant; it meant she’d only just learned something and was considering very intently what to do with such information. It was a dangerous expression. “Let him know he owes me his life.”

It was that, and nothing else, that swayed Loki in her favor; Thor knew it to be a truth. Chaos and trickery; Darcy spoke Loki’s language, even if she’d never know it. “Frigga held her own,” he said, keeping Darcy’s gaze. “In her honor, I shall grant you this wish, Princess.”

Thor managed to shake his brother, if not the procession in its entirety, as they rounded the gardens center of the city. “This really is amazing,” Darcy told him, gaze high as she followed the careful curves and lines of the ancient architect. “It’s beautiful here.”

“You look as I imagine I did when I first visited New York. This seems so simple to me in comparison. New York...stands against all odds. Midgardian physics is a marvel.”

“I mean, you’ve seen large part of it rebuilt two or three times now.” She laughed, swinging their hands between them. Thor stopped to tug her closer, pulling her up against his chest. “I totally kicked that guys ass. Did you see? I did the thigh thing Natasha does. She never even taught me that - his head was just there, I saw the opportunity and I took it.”

“The Lady Natasha would be proud,” Thor agreed, Darcy’s delight catching in a smile. “If I can find a hologram of the events, we can bring it with us when we return. They’re...something like the snow globe you have on your mantle. It would make a fine gift for her.”
“And one for Clint,” Darcy added, raising a brow. “He’ll like the headlock.”

Thor had long since accepted his fate; Darcy and Clint were friends, one-time bedfellows be damned. Thor could hardly spite them for it. “And one for Barton. And Tony, of course, as you utilized his gifts beyond their expected capacity. Your kick had quite a bit of force. I suspect you broke his kneecap.”

“Hell yeah I broke his kneecap!” She leaned back, fully trusting the span of Thor’s hands at the small of her back to support her, and stood on his toes. “Spin me!” Dutifully, he swung her in a circle, grinning as she laughed, fingers curled into his shirt. Thor knew they were with audience, but also knew them to make a charming picture.

He kissed her, again, in the middle of the flower district while the citizens cooed and hummed their sweet approval. He laughed when the little rain of flower petals began, falling soft like snowflakes in every color. They caught in Darcy’s hair, and his beard. “This is some romantic fucking bullshit,” she told him, sounding very much delighted and Thor was reminded that he never had the chance to romance her properly. “Is my whole visit here going to be like this...”

“A wholesome balance of battle and romance?” Thor asked mildly, catching sight of his brother lining on the edge of the crowd, pressing coins into the palm of a small child. Loki was up to something. “I’m certain you hope so. And indeed, it is the Asgardian way.”

Darcy laughed, full mouth stretched wide as a faint pink blush stole across her freckled cheeks. The boy appeared beside them, looking especially wide-eyed and tousle haired. Thor wouldn’t put it past Loki to have sought out the sweetest looking child for whatever he endeavored.

“For the Warrior Princess, your highness,” the boy told Thor, with a trembling lip. He held in his small, dirty hands, a flower crown in pale purple blossoms.

Thor took it, as Darcy touched the boy’s face. He trembled prettily, fluttering in her hand so much a little bird. Thor could very nearly hear the collective sigh of the people around him. Asgardians were horrible romantics. “It’s lovely, but I’m not really a warrior kiddo.”

“You fight like one,” the child said, with the sort of tremulous earnestness that came with being very young. He ran off, into the milling crowd, before Darcy could muster another answer.

He placed it atop her head, tucking a wayward curl behind her ear. “Don’t be mad if we end up
another statue in the gardens,” he warned her with a grin, stooping to press a kiss against her jaw as he spoke. “My people are well enamored of you and you are not helping your case by being so very charming.”

“Please. We both know I’m about as charming as a wet cat. The king just knows how to campaign,” Darcy said, with no dissembling. Clever,Thor thought again, with nothing but pride. “He’s pushing me hard on purpose; the statue, the frescoes...that had to be him, right? But why? What does he know that we don’t?”

“I have learned that there is always something he knows, that us lesser Gods do not. It’s been that way our whole lives.” He spoke dryly, recalling all the secrets Loki had ferreted out over the years, and all the ones he had sat on in the dark, dwelling. “We shall not know, until he desires it so. Never, if that is his wish, but he does so love an audience.”

Darcy’s mouth pursed, and Thor frowned, wary when she didn’t share her thought. “He’ll have us married before my return, won’t he? If he’s pushing us this hard, he won’t let you return until we’re married.”

It pulled Thor up short; he hadn’t considered it. With a short glance at Loki, who had yet to take his own eyes off of them, Thor realized Darcy had the right of it. “It is likely.”

She bit at her bottom lip, a nervous gesture that only endeared him further. “He will let us return though, right?”

Perhaps not, but Thor was not worried. He’d play his last hand if he had to, to get her home. He suspected he would not have to, however. “Heimdall does not answer to the King, ultimately. He answers to the Higher Calling. If you wish to return home, home you shall be returned too.”

***

As predicted, the visage of their embrace in a rain of flower petals was played in gentle repeat over the holograms high in the city, and Thor found it to be preferable than those that came before, of her bare and bloody and strung by his hammer (preferable for others to view, at least). Darcy wore her flower crown for the rest of the day, the soft and lovely petals a striking juxtaposition to her lethal looking catsuit. Thor thought it suited her well and made a note with people in charge of such imagery to have one made in miniature for himself.
“Tomorrow, you shall be taken to the temples,” Loki told her, on their sojourn back to the palace proper. Loki had open for traps to be brought, the horseless kinds of carriages he had always favored. He sat across from Thor and Darcy, sun catching on his silver hair. “I must confess, I am intrigued to see which temple will call your heart.”


“Well I can hardly deny as much,” Loki assured her, with a fatherly pat on her arm. Darcy bore the touch with a curious sort of will. “But it is not for us to decide how the Temples call our us. You may worship at Thor’s altar, an altar you raised yourself, but his Temple is not alone on the Mountains and we are not in charge of which Gods guide our spirit. It is like you may be called by the Patron Saints, as well. You are an interesting creature, Princess. I imagine a number of cosmic forces will be interested in getting their hands on you. Metaphorically, of course.”

Darcy looked pointedly at her arm, where Loki had patted. “Thor is my only God.”

Loki smiled patiently at her - an expression odd on Odin’s face and no better suited for Loki’s own. “There is power in the choices we make. I do not mean to offend you, Darcy. I only mean to say - you may be further blessed by your ancestors. You have the Valkyrie spirit, as example. You are a warrior. And so, the Valkyrie Temple may call to your heart. It does not lessen your faithfulness to my -- son.”

“Man--- I’m way more of a bad ass here.”

“Any man might find himself in the company of armor and swords, but it takes heart to wear and weird them.” Thor didn’t startle, but it was fine thing. He hauled Darcy back, even as Loki appeared beside them, giving his brother a hard look. “I’m certain Asgard is not what gives you heart, Princess.”

“I’m not a warrior,” Darcy insisted, shirking in her seat beside Thor. He wanted to protest on her behalf; Darcy had always had a Warrior's spirit, after all. He had said as much, time and again. “I just...I’m surrounded by heroes. I find it important to be able to keep up, a little, at least. We can’t all look like Thor, okay? Seriously. Steve doesn’t even look like Thor and he’s the human equivalent of genetically modified corn.”

“Darcy trained tirelessly after I presented the position for the Council of Nine. It was important to her that she represent Midgard to the highest standard.” Thor explained, ignoring very heartily the glare Darcy pointed his way. “Of which, I protested of course. The Midgardian ideals are a great deal
different than those we enjoy here.”

“She is a bit thin,” Loki agreed, with a strange, wistful sort of sigh. Thor thought that a bit hypocritical, given his own bean-pole nature; although such things were more designated by his Jötunn heritage, and so best not brought up. “I don’t understand your disinclination to be titled a warrior. The Warriors Three have told me of battles they’ve shared with you.”

“That shit in New Mexico? Okay, that was like a fire-breathing toaster oven and I just saved a bunch of gerbils, man.” She squirmed. “You’re making it more than it is.”

Loki pinned her with a steely, pale gaze. “And when the Dark Elves invaded. Your story is writ now, Darcy Lewis. It is known and told. You may underplay it as you desire, but I have seen it played across the stars. You held your own then, as well, did you not?”

“I’m not sure how comfortable I am with people knowing all about my life.” She paused, leaning back against Thor’s arm where it was wrapped around her shoulder. “Sometimes you have to fight or run. You know - fight or flight. I hate running, and sometimes running is not really an option. I had to protect Jane, in England. Sometimes shit is bigger than yourself.” She clenches her teeth, and Thor prays Loki does not choose this moment to discuss their friendship and the faux pas Thor has committed. “I’m not a warrior. I mean, yeah - I’m a bad-ass. But I’m not exactly marching off to battle.”

“You’ve marched into everyone presented to you.” If Thor looks closely, he almost can’t see Odin, for all that Loki seems to shine bright through his own shade. “I’m uncertain as to what you consider makes a warrior. I will tell you this, on Asgard it is the heart. Anyone can don armor, or take up the sword. But it is another thing entirely to put them to use. I shall concede that on Midgard, you are not a warrior by their standards. I do not understand their measurement of such things. But on Asgard, your heart tells me otherwise.” He paused, gaze fluttering quickly to Thor. “Frigga did not live the life of battle. No, she was a Dreamer. But she died fighting, and for that - she will be remembered as a Warrior Queen.” He smiled then, and Thor found his own face stretched to match. “And you cannot honestly tell me, that were this carriage overturned right now in violence, you would not join the frey and fight.”

“I feel like...if I say no...you’re going to make that happen.” She sighed, and Thor bit back another smile at that. She didn’t miss it though, and her own mouth curled at the corner, a devious smirk that promised nothing good. “You know, maybe you’re right. If I never knocked this big guy out in New Mexico all those years ago, I wouldn’t even be here.”

Thor winced, as Loki’s face lit up with delight. “I beg your pardon, but are you claiming to have bested Thor?”
“He wasn’t juiced up at the time, so that did give me an unfair advantage,” Darcy admitted, her heart honest. “But yeah - I electrocuted him. Also I hit him with my car. Those were separate events.”

“She bested me with her own lightning,” Thor conceded, content to drag out her praise and accolades. He paused, considering. As well as he knew Darcy, he knew Loki better, and so he added, “she does remarkably well in a panic. I would not recommend surprising her, Father.”

***

After a far more sedate dinner in their private quarters of wild hare in a berry sauce Darcy found very much to her liking, Thor sat behind her on the bed, gently untying the braids from her hair. “Quite the day, Princess.”

She turned, pulling the last of her hair through his fingers. “You like calling me that. You’ve always liked calling me that, but more now that it’s got some weight to it.”

“It’s always had weight to me,” he assured her, brushing a thumb over the darkened bruise on her jaw. “I’ve never been one to say anything I did not fully mean.”

“That’s fair.” She pressed her face into his open palm, lashes fluttering. “What will the Temples be like? What’s expected of me?”

“You’ll make offerings to whatever Temples call you. It’s a maze, of sorts. Halls, lined with small unmarked alters. None stand out against any others; the calling of the hearts must be made in perfect blindness.” He eased her back on the bed, and she allowed it with good grace. As he worked open the buckles of her boots, he explained. “There is no shame in being called by a number of Gods. It's a blessing, truthfully. The God you choose, is different. Make your pilgrimage honestly; I’ll take no offense with the Gods that bless you.”

“It feels wrong,” Darcy admitted. “To associate with any God that isn’t you. Probably because I was raised very loosely Catholic and they drive that ‘worship no others before me’ thing pretty hard.”

“So worship no others but me.” He took up her bare feet into his lap, digging the pads of his thumbs into the soft arches. “But turn no blessing away.”
The damnable cloak-suit unfolded from her body like an oil spill, slithering away to hang its sentient self up in the wardrobe. It left her bare to him, hair splayed across the silken pillows. “Mmm. How---How do I know if it’s calling to me? A temple, I mean. Or a God.”

“You’ll know it in your heart. You’ll feel it as you feel me, although perhaps lesser. And you’ll place your offering on the altar. If it is accepted, the sigils overhead will glow. The Gods do not call to us all in the same way; many people find following the call harder than others. I cannot even fathom what affect your Midgardian blood might have. I’m certain Agent will be consulted.”

“You’re temple will call to me,” Darcy insisted, thighs parting just so as her body went lax beneath his fingertips. “Right?”

“I have no doubt. It is those Gods who desire to bless you, those among us and beyond. I am here, Princess, and I would bless you with all that I have.”

Her foot settled in his lap, betwixt his legs, and she lifted herself up on her elbows. “How about you get over here and bless me right now?”

Chapter End Notes

next - the Temple.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

this is not the temple you were looking for.

This is just...this is just porn. this is just almost three thousand words of fucking porn.

enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The following morning burned a brilliant luminary, with cloud speckled skies cast in new cerulean dawn. Darcy was bare beside him, and Thor woke distracted by the shape of her body beneath the translucent muslin cloth. He’d considered falling asleep with her in a naked tangle to be a pleasure, but it did not compare to waking in the same state. The contrast of her milky skin against the deep bistre linens called to his hands to touch her, and so he did, pulling the sheet away with a slow, revealing swipe. Darcy did not stir, ample chest rising and falling with her deep, even breaths. The light from the window spilled over her body, casting shadows down her cheeks through her dark lashes and Thor was, as ever, enchanted.

_The Goddess weep and men grow nervous._

He touched her skin, the warm flat of his palm tracing down the slope of her rib cage to rest in the valley of her waist, and then up the mountain of her hips. Darcy was Earth personified, a perfect testimony of her realm. He pulled at her hip very gently, until she laid beside him on her back, smooth belly exposed, with her hair spilled across her breasts. He splayed his hand over the small of her stomach, enjoying the way his fingers spanned her easily. She was so small beneath him, like a wayward fae fallen into his bed. The Søkeren glistened, a shimmery pearl swirl that twisted up her beautiful body.

That was Thor’s, and no one else’s. That was his name, writ across her skin. Let the Gods have their look at her, they could not pay witness without seeing Thor sewn along her soul.

As he drew his hand down, between her thighs, Thor felt her stir. “Mmmhm. There’s got to be a rule about fucking before going to Temple. It’s subconsciously frowned upon in my part of the universe.” But even as she spoke, she let her thighs fall open, making space for him.

Thor touched her with a rough hand, pushing two fingers into her before she was truly ready. He’d have preferred her better prepared, but he’d long since learned Darcy liked the little hurt. She hissed through her teeth, tipping her hips up to meet his thrust. “Perhaps,” he told her, watching her hand
snake down her body to join his betwixt her thighs. She worked her fingers in circles to match his push, an easy synchronicity found between them. “It depends on your temple. And as you desire to find mine, I would send you truly blessed at my hand.”

And so he did, with a hand between her thighs, fingers curled into her little body. Thor watched the way her body moved, the rise and fall of her hips uneven to the rise and fall of her breath. He pulled her helping hand away, replacing the her fingers with the insistent press of his thumb against her instead. He tangled her wet fingers into his own free hand, and smiled as she despaired. Her plush mouth falling open even as her eyes fluttered closed and Thor was enchanted. Thor was entranced. “I want—”

“Who says your desires matter here?” Thor asked her, very lightly, finding her wet enough for a third finger. “You may beg the blessing, but you cannot choose how it might come, Princess. That is for me to decide.” Since they’d come to Asgard, he’d taken her only gently; reverential, grateful. There was beauty to be found in such coupling, a satiety specific to such tenderness, but Thor found himself hungry for something else today. Something born, very truly, from jealousy.

The Gods would have their pick of her today - Gods come and gone before Thor, and those that stood the mortal plane.

Loki.

Loki would be among them, God of Chaos, God of Mischief. Such things were in Darcy, very brightly and at the fore. Loki would be prominent, in the Gods who answered her light, and her subconscious prayer.

She would take to the temples today, and the light in her would call to all the Gods and they would answer. The light in them would answer, and Thor knew he would be among those called to watch over her, but he knew too - he would not be alone.

“Oh--- Fuck,” Darcy choked, and Thor came back to himself from the spiral of his more wicked, jealous thoughts, to find her spilling wetly across his hand, thighs shaking tight around him as she curled her toes into the sheets. “God.”

“That is one,” he said, breathless as he pushed a fourth finger inside of her, and a sharp, shuddery cry from her lungs as she trembled, body quaking, spent pleasure spinning anew in relentless waves. She sang so easily for him. “But I am a a thrice blessed God, and so should you be. What would you ask of me, Princess? What would you beg?” He kissed the corner of her open mouth. “Pray.”
“Hurt me.”

It struck him as surely as any lightning bolt, a white-light fire that burned in his belly. Thor felt it, felt the words sear themselves through his blood, beating a fine and tremulous beat in his chest. *Hurt me*, her soul cried to him and Thor shook with it, a dizzy sort of lust spilling hot in his veins. *Hurt me.*

A part of him wished he could have told her no, could have promised sweetly *he would never*. But he could not lie to her, not so boldly. He would hurt her, and she would *love it*. God and supplicant, he would bless her with this pain and she would take it unto herself and be risen clean from the fires they burned together.

Shaking, Thor pulled himself free of her and watched her eyes flutter open. What they saw in him, Thor could not say, but she held his gaze with her own, bright burning eyes. “*Please*.”

Pushing away, Thor left the bed. Darcy stayed where he’d left her, legs splayed and that sunset pink of her cunt revealed in shameless pleasure. His breath came harder, sharper than it ever had on Earth when she’d begged the same and Thor wanted her in a new way, in a violent way that might’ve scared him if he couldn’t hear her crying for it in his heart of hearts. “On your---on your knees,” he managed, through clenched teeth. “Arms behind your back. Edge of the bed. Here.” He gestured before him, hands curled into a fist.

She scrambled to obey on wavering legs. Obediently, she put her knees to the edge of the bed, thigh spread faintly, just enough to keep her balance. Lastly, she put her arms behind her, one hand cupping each opposite elbow. It thrust her chest out, to brush against Thor’s stomach, the bed a high enough platform that she was only a head shorter like this.

He touched her face first, cupped her chin, and pulled at her bottom lip with his thumb until she opened for him. Her tongue was hot, and unforgivably soft where he pressed against it, the edge of her teeth a sharp contrast where it bit gently into his skin. Thor wanted to say so much to her, wanted to tell her that she had taken him and made him *more*. That under her care, he’d grown more in her Earthly minute than an Eon had granted him. That any gift of power making space within him had come through her, and so it was hers. He was hers. But he found that he could not, having lost his voice in favor for touch, his sense muddled, drunk on her. So instead, he touched her face, and forced her own taste across her willing tongue.

He kissed her next, jealous of that taste, and her body strained up to meet his mouth, obedient hands remaining where he commanded though he knew very well she’d prefer them tangled in his hair. He touched her cunt next, tender surely from his rough hand, but she was wet and open for him and he pushed four fingers back inside, and ate her moan, as he grasped at her hair with his other hand,
Indeed he was forced to pull her away, his hand more obedient than his mouth that could not stop kissing her. “The Gods—” Thor slurred, achingly hard and desperately wanting. “The Gods provide their path, but it is unto the Supplicant to follow. I would give you pleasure, Princess. But you must take it.” He could simply have her. He could throw her down upon the pelts and rut into her like a beast and she would spill across his cock, and cry very pretty as he spent himself as deep inside her as her little body would permit. He could. But Darcy, sweet, supple, Darcy had taught him something the entire Cosmos had not yet beat into him.

Patience.

“Can you take it, Little Girl?” He asked her, biting kisses up her jaw. “Can you take it?”

He’d have accepted a yes, he’d have accepted a breathless little cry. And he would certainly accept Darcy throwing her head back, that he might bite at her throat, and telling him in a broken voice, “I was made to take you.”

Outside, the brilliant bright sky swirled, cerulean sweeping away to something purple and bruised, a low storm thundering hot on the horizon. “Yes,” Thor agreed, fierce but faint. “Yes you were. Take your pleasure, Princess. Take what I have offered you.”

“My hands—”

“And so she rode him like that, where he stood before her, fingers curled into her body. She rolled her hips, fingers biting into her own flesh, as she fucked herself against him, against the force of his thumb against her tender parts, against the deep, full press of his fingers fucked up inside of her. She grew wetter, oh but she always did, the clench of her cunt nigh breaking his knuckles as he yanked her head back harder, and wrapped her hair tighter around his hand. “Do you feel the storm rising, Princess? Do you feel it along your skin?”

“Yes,” she hissed, teeth clenched even as her body worked to obey him. “Yes—”

“I would see you spend before the first lightning strikes.” He kissed her mouth, too hard, too deep, and very nearly failed to pull himself away that she might breath. When at last he managed, she came pulling.
He was not still. He was not *cruel*. He fucked her on the better part of his hand to the tempo of her own body, hard enough to feel the burn in his forearm, hard enough to jar her where she struggled to keep balance, to all but lift her off her knees, like a shameless puppet. To her perfection, she never stilled, falling against him, her hot breath burning wetly across his chest. He did not touch her anywhere but her cunt and her hair, keeping her caught between those two points of pain and pleasure. He wanted --- he wanted a great many things, and he thought he might have them. He wanted to take her from behind, with a hand wrapped 'round her throat, wanted to feel the clench of her lovely cunt break him apart on the last stuttered breath he allowed her. He wanted her atop him, nails scoring hot red lines down her own pale body as he lifted her on his cock, and drove her down with all his might. He wanted to have her face down in the mattress, fingers curling into the bedcloth, pelts muffling her desperate cries as he fucked her hard and deep like she always begged for.

He felt it inside her, pleasure spilling out like a flooded river as her hips began to stutter. He held her in place, flush against himself, as she fucked her through another peak, lightning serrating a brilliant sky. “God! God! Thor.” Tears broke over her cheeks, burning wet where they trailed across his chest. “Please, please, please---”

He touched her everywhere with sticky hands, smoothing over every inch and ample curve. He touched her breasts, pinching at her nipples, grasped at her ass, pulling her hard against him, fucking up against the soft give of her stomach. “I don’t---” he laughed, helpless to the touch of her, to the terrible wealth of her. “I don’t know how I want you.”

“My mouth, do you want my---”She suggested, and Thor did indeed pay mind to her mouth by planting his palm firmly over it before she ruin him with words alone.

“Always, but not right now,” he told her, sounding very stupid even to his own ears. “I want so much, I don’t know where to start,” he told her, on a breathless laugh, looking down into her wide, bright eyes. “My mouth,” he decided, if only to buy himself time to decide how he might have her.

Perhaps he would be embarrassed later by the manner in which he threw her down on the bed. She bounced once, a surprised laugh escaping her, but Thor held her down, a hand splayed across her belly as he fit himself between her thighs. “My hands,” she cried, wriggling beneath his firm hold.

“Will remain where I have demanded,” he said again, liking too much the visage she made, helpless against the cloths, with her arms pinned behind her. It must hurt, he thought. It must ache where it pulled at her shoulders, at her chest where it was forced forward and prominent. But nothing in her told him no, not her words, not her body, not her soul where it kissed his. Indeed, she moved to make room for him, both thighs coming to frame his face, the flat of her foot pressing hard into his shoulder blades.
Though he was a proud man, and at times a shameless braggart, Thor did not exaggerate when he considered himself a consummate lover. Such was his nature, after all, as the God of Fertility. But when he fell upon her, there was no finesse. He tasted her without manners, burying his face into the mess he’d made and drinking from her pleasure. She pushed against his face, rode him in such a way that made him fear he’d spend against the sheets, her strong thighs locked about him, her feet braced for leverage. Thor held her down at the belly, but let her push against him all the same. He fell upon her starving for her cries, starving for the spill of her, the trembling, savage way her body burst like a nova, hot and bright and catching. When she came, Thor did not stop, just licked himself further inside of her that he might feel what she’s feeling, knowing in his soul and die a little with her in that moment.

Only when she couldn't take it anymore, when her thighs came about him so tightly he could not breathe, did he stop. He laid there for a long moment with his face pillowed against his his cheek and the messy state of her cunt filling his vision, stunned stupid by her own rapture.

“Thor,” Darcy barely managed a whisper, but he heard the prayer all the same.

“Darcy, I----”

“Thor.”

“I---”

In the end, when he took her, it was nothing so complicated as her spilled across the bed on her back. He pushed inside her with a terrible cry, certain he would lose it before he bottomed out. He pushed himself to his knees, and pulled her bottom half into his lap, her arms still pinned beneath him. He could see--- everything. He could see her reddened little cunt, where it was split wide on his cock, the way she took him so shamelessly, the way her body shivered and heaved, lovely tits bouncing as her thighs clenched around his hips. “I want---” He stopped himself, spinning on his own thoughts. “Darcy---”

_I want to put a child in you_, he thought, feeling his balls draw up so swiftly his vision turned black. His cheeks burned at having having even thought it, as errant as the thought seemed to be. He touched her cunt, thumbing at her clit just to feel her body jolt as she came without warning, tears spilling hot down her cheeks as she cried out, stealing any remaining patience he had left. The sky came with them, bursting in a torrent of rain and Thor finally spilled inside of her, their bodies shaking in a breathless, dizzy tangle.
hey, hi. it's been a while since they'd done the real down and dirty. how'd it go? eh? eh?
Y'all were a little quiet last chapter, you know I'm a fucking slut for feedback.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

its been so long and I AM SO SORRY.

we are super close to the end here.

and I have...

well. I've been inspired to write an original story from the concepts of this one and I got distracted. If you all ever want to see what I can do with this world outside the constraints of the Marvel Fandom - that is a thing that is happening. I'll be publishing through Amazon this summer. Temple Heart will remain here! They will be separate stories and the benefit of Amazon self-publishing is that I retain the copyright. They will be VERY similar, but also very different. I've already come up with a zillion new things I can do. I'm so fucking excited to give you guys this. to be able to continue this saga in a whole new, more original way.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Prior to ascending the Temple steps, you will be bathed in the pools of the Beannú River at the foot of Mount Adhradh,” the Magis explained to Darcy. The Priestess wore robes of filmy amber gauze, their hair long and unadorned. They had come en masse, the full ensemble coming to greet the new Princess, and they outnumbered the royal party. The contingent today was a small one, Thor, Loki, the Warriors three and the Council. Darcy cut for a solemn figure in her catsuit, hair bound in a braid down her back. “All that come unto the mountain shall rise as they were born, barefoot and unbound.”

“Naked,” Darcy said, with a wry tilt to her smile. “Of course I’ll be naked.”

“She’ll need assistance. The pull of her planet is far weaker,” Thor interjected gently, addressing the Priestess. “Her boots give her strength to walk on Asgard, without them she will not make it.” She managed of course, but Thor could see how gravity pulled her here and to ascend the stairs without aid would be a terrible feat.

Though her expression remained unmoved by his plight, the old woman nodded nonetheless. “Accommodations for the Midgardian Princess shall be made.”

“No.”
“Darcy.” Beyond her name, Thor wasn’t sure how to argue that she accept the assistance. He admired her will, her ferocity, but lesser mountains could not be defeated by sheer stubbornness alone and there was no shame in her Midgardian physiology requiring accommodations on Asgard. It was no different than her boots. “It is not required that you journey alone.”

“I’d like to try.” She spoke simply, but without a smile. “Can I try again, if I can’t do it on my own?”

“The Gods do not limit access,” the Priestess told her, nodding. “If it is your wish to Ascend alone, then so shall it be.”

Thor looked to the mountain once more and frowned. “Magis—”

“You do not Ascend, God of Three,” a young Priestess interrupted, her proud chin raised. Thor had been gone too long; his people had grown bold with him. His indignation must have shown on his face, for the girl pursed her mouth, but explained herself all the same. “You are a God among Gods, your Highness, as is any other - even your father. You are Prince unto the Throne, important on Asgard and across the Nine Realms - but the Mountain does not care. The Temple does not care. You have no jurisdiction here. We answer to the Higher Calling.”

“If the Princess means to journey alone, we must honor her heart and let her. To do otherwise is a violence against the Precepts of the Mountain.” Loki laid a hand over Thor’s arm, the wizened hand of their father. “Let it be.”

Darcy had been mostly quiet, and so Thor looked to her. She had a stubborn set about her, arms crossed beneath her chest. She said nothing but stood fast beneath his gaze. “As you wish,” he conceded. “I can see that this is no battle for me to fight.”

“It isn’t,” Darcy agreed, letting an almost-smile touch the corner of her mouth. “I don’t need my hand held for this, babe. Some things are supposed to be difficult.”

“You needn’t your handheld for anything,” Thor agreed, only a little mulishly. “But it is a long way up, Princess. No God asks this; it isn’t expected of you.”

“I know. But I just—this is how it needs to be.” She shrugged, looking very at peace with herself. Thor thought it had something to do with his prior blessings, the hazy, calm look in her eye. He’d have not been so rough with her if he knew her intentions to Ascend alone. It was a long way up, steep and frightful. “This is how I want it to be.”
“You needn’t be alone.”

“I know that.” She looked up at him, and he could feel it in his soul, the soothing whisper of her heart praying to his. “I won’t be alone. Not really. I just don’t want to be carried. You can’t do everything for me.”

“I love you, I should want always to catch you when you stumble.” He felt his shoulders tighten, a slight hunch taking over him at the thought of having such conversations among an audience. “I mean no disrespect. I only mean to save you pain.”

“I know.” She took his hand into her own, and let them swing gently between their bodies. “But I’m not afraid to fail. I should at least try on my own, before asking for help. How do I know I can’t do it? I don’t, just like I don’t know if I can. The only way to know...is to try.”

Sif slapped him hard between the shoulder blades. “You’ve fallen enamored of a warrior, my Lord. And yet you stand shocked when her warriors’ spirit stirs true.”

Darcy, with her keen eyes, lifted both her hands. “I suppose you could carry me now though. Just to the pantheon. I need to reserve my strength or whatever.”

“Or whatever.” Thor felt rather warm-cheeked at being so easily read by her. But then, that was her nature. Sif gave him a knowing look, as she inserted herself between them and the others, forming an allusion of privacy. He scooped Darcy up and held her with the ease of much practice and ignored the awkward silence that befell them. He tucked her neatly beneath his chin, the bulk of his body wrapped up around her own. “To the pantheon, then.”

The contingent fell behind them, though Thor could sense that Loki wasn’t so much inclined, as being held politely captive by Sif’s clever small talk. “I think I can do it,” Darcy told him. “I don’t think it’ll be easy or anything, but I think I can do it.”

“I do not doubt you.” Not that. Never that. “I would simply spare you the hardship. I should never see you suffer, Princess. Not when there is aught I could do to save you from it.”

She pressed a little kiss to the hollow of his throat, where it peaked from above his open collar. “They already think Midgardian’s are weak, here. Lesser. Younger. Small. Dumb.”
“No---”

“A little,” she argued, and Thor could not deny her entirely. Midgard was very young, but he’d never heard anyone refer to them as stupid, or the like. “I wouldn’t say they find you inferior. I think perhaps it’s more they find you...”

“Say it.” She tilted her head back so she could look at him, and the sunlight caught the tips of her eyelashes making them sparkle. “’Mon. Say it.”

“Adorable.”

“I’d rather they think me stupid.” She worked a hand into his beard, scratching her nails deep the way he liked. “All things equal.”

And that was their private precept, Thor couldn’t deny it. “I didn’t mean physically. To ask of a mortal to do as a God does is to ask a fish to fly. I simply mean...I simply mean that we are equal in status. I am no better than you.”

“I need to do this alone for the same reasons you asked me to walk naked through your entire fucking kingdom.” She patted his cheek when he hesitated to set her down as they approached the steps of the pantheon. “’Mon, Big Guy.”

“Pray to me,” he told her, as he set her on her feet and cupped her sweet face between both palms. There was no levity in his voice, nothing joyous. “Pray to me, should you need strength, and I shall answer.”

"I know. I know." Her lashes fluttered as she let herself be held. "You are my God above all others. Before all others."

“Princess,” the Magi called, and Thor kissed Darcy very softly, before releasing her unto the mercies of other gods, some more jealous than he, more covetous. “It is time.”

“I would baptize her myself,” Loki called, stepping forward with his fathers' austere expression. “That is my jurisdiction,” he added, almost wryly. “What say you, Magis?”
“The Temple hears your request and grants that you offer with a free and noble heart.” Thor might have argued that, were it not for Sif who elbowed him in the side and shook her head. A free and noble heart, though. Loki? More like, whatever game he aspired to aligned with the cosmos. It would not be the first time. The world desired Chaos for balance. “Asphodel will aid you in this endeavor.” The Magis beckoned forward a young priestess - the one who had spoken boldly to Thor - forward. “Come. The River awaits us.”

They stepped inside the temple, with its mossy floors and open ceilings. Across the uneven ground, a river did run, making a pool in the center before curling out the other side. The Priestesses not named to help stretched their line and began to lay their hands across the contingent.

“As we are born,” Magis reminded them, letting her auster robe be taken by another young acolyte.

“We will not be baptized,” Fandral commented; not an argument, but a statement. He allowed his armors to be collected.

“But you pay witness to the coming of one born under a different star. The Princess is a New Child of different dawn. The Temple asks that we come as we are born, that we might all be made equal in this.”

Thor watched Darcy, even as he allowed himself passively to be undressed. Asphodel had put her hands upon Darcy’s catsuit, but a brow furrowed upon her face. “I do not know how to remove this magic. The New Star is young, but this Magic is older than even us.”

Loki - naked in his father's skin and wasn’t that a thing Thor could have lived without ever putting in his mind - replaced Asphodel’s hands. “The secret to the spell is sentience,” he noted, a hand on Darcy’s shoulder and another on her hip. Thor swallowed on a grimace. “You must ask it.”

Darcy nodded slowly, and the suit began to unfold over her body, laying a benign cloak from her shoulders, the fabric caught under Loki’s palms where he still touched her, glowing silver blue. Loki, to his greatest credit, kept a firm gaze on her face and stepped away with a nod.

“Those who would rise with the New Star should first be kneeling.” The Magis bid them to the soft patches of moss surrounding the pool. “Do you know the prayer, King of Kings?”
“I do.” Loki did not kneel but stood at the edge of the water.

The Magis stepped away from the pool. “Asphodel.”

“Come, Princess.” Asphodel took Darcy’s hand and led her to the waters, where Loki followed. “It is common to see things in the water. Memories, perhaps, or even visions. Do not be afraid.”

Already Darcy looked dazzled by the water, eyes glossy as her cheeks turned pink. Such was the way of the Beannú River, which flows with enlightenment. She touched Asphodel’s face with a soft, trembling palm and Thor watched on, body gone tight and tense.

“I saw you in a dream.” Her thumb brushed Asphodel’s mouth, and no one spoke to interrupt them. Not even Loki who stood very close. Thor could see him for Loki again, not Odin - but it was clear that no one else could. “But you were flowers. Little purple flowers, a whole field at the foot of a different mountain. I braided them into a crown while I waited for Thor to come.”

“And he kneeled before you, and you laid it upon his head and made him King. That was not your dream, New Star,” Asphodel told her, turning to kiss her palm. Thor felt the press of her lips against his own skin and it burned frightfully. “That was Thors vision.”

Darcy blinked at her, frowning. “No, I remember---”

“Shhh,” Asphodel shook her head. She laid a palm over Darcy’s and held both hands against her own cheek. “Remember - it is the water. Do not be afraid.”

“I am not afraid,” Darcy spoke, voice catching the Asgardian cadence strangely. Thor felt the heat of it in his heart and cock, and knew by the awkward squirming beside him of the contingent - he was not alone. Her voice was made to speak the mother tongue.

“Then we shall begin. My King,” Asphodel turned to Loki. “Begin the blessings, and I shall anoint our New Star, the Princess Darcy.”

“Ne forte occurrant vobis revertentes: et dignum te Deorum.” Loki whispered, cupping his palm around the back of Darcy’s neck, holding her gently and apart from himself. Asphodel drew a line in sticky golden honey over Darcy’s mouth, a sweet offering to be shared. “Let your light glow unto the abyss, that all who look upon you see the heart of you, a new child among them. Let the Gods
and Goddess See you, Daughter of the Skies. Let them come unto you, and protect you. Blessed Child, be clean and new to greet them.”

“Kneel, New Star,” Asphodel instructed, taking Darcy’s hand and leading her lower into the water. “You are not afraid.”

Loki kissed her, and though Thor knew it to be a part of the ritual - he loathed it. Darcy jerked very gently in surprise, but the water had made her docile. It was brief, a dry press of lips to lips, made sticky with the golden honey, but Loki did not linger. “Breathe in,” he instructed, very quietly, and Darcy did, never so obedient. “Rise when the water tells you to. No moment sooner.”

“Listen to the River, New Star,” Asphodel joined her hand with Loki’s, at the nape of Darcy’s neck, and kissed her too. Sweeter, but Thor still felt the burn of it. “You are not afraid.”

She went unto the waters very easily, trusting the hands of Loki and Asphodel to support her. She did not rise immediately, as some did. Both Loki and Asphodel let her slip deeper, their hands falling free from where they held her. Thor made to move, but the Acolyte stopped them, their bare bodies pressed cold against his own. “Midgardians—” His throat was dry, fearful. “They aren’t...like us. They aren’t made as we are. She cannot stay below the water.”

“She will stay as long as the water bids her,” the acolyte told him, firm hands pressed against his chest. Thor thought - he had absolutely bedded the both of them. Possibly at the same time. Their bodies seemed so strange to him now, and he did not like the way they touched him with familiarity. “No harm shall come to her, your Highness. Not here.”

An eon seemed to pass, and even Loki and Asphodel left the water. “What does it mean,” Loki asked The Magis. “Why do the waters keep her?”

“They have much to tell her.” The Magis looked curious though, as she watched the smooth, still surface of the water. “It has been a long time since a Midgardian has come to the Mountain. And those who did were not written in the stars. The Water will show her what she needs to now. We will wait. Pray to the All-Mother, perhaps, if you are weary.”

Loki and Thor shared a look; it was not common for the Gods to pray. They made blessings and acted in favor of the All Mother, but they did not call to her as the others did. Around them, the contingent lowered their heads, mouths moving on silent words of worship. Loki, though, tipped his head up as he began to whisper. Thor did the same, lashes fluttering closed. All Mother, he thought. You know this Daughter. You have accepted the offering of our joined bodies. She is your child, under my light and of her own.
Yes, the All Mother whispered back and Thor trembled as he felt the Grace of the Higher Calling touch his soul.

When Darcy rose, she did not so much as gasp. She stood in the waters, the pool rippling wildly around her body. Her skin glimmered like diamond shine where the water droplets racing over her milky skin caught the sun where it poured in from the cloudless sky. She did not speak, lips held tightly closed, but she looked to him and he could see the smile in her eyes.

“She is ready to ascend,” Asphodel announced, holding her hand to Darcy and helping her from the pool. “You may dress and wait in the Salon Fidem as she makes her journey.”

Chapter End Notes

Fun Fact - asphodel is my favorite name in the world. It's a lily flower that represents death (as many to) and it's also a flower that (as previously mentioned) represents where mortal souls go in the afterworld according to greek mythology. The Field of Asphodels.

love asphodels. love em. they're actually kind of ugly too which makes me love them more. and also, they're fucking poisonous.

my name is lyndsey lecureux and I'm writing a fuckin book yall.
The Salon Fidem is a terrace parlor overlooking the winding path up the mountain Darcy will trek. Much of the contingent waits in the parlor proper, sipping honey-wine and basking in the calm that Temple always brings, with its sweet music and soft, warm breeze. Thor steps outside though, onto the veranda. It is a green and lush place, spilling over with creeping vines and newly bloomed flowers. Fat, buzzing bees hum between the petals, unbothered by Thor or much of anything. A butterfly lands in his hair and he lets it be; to dismiss it with a wave would be a great offense.

Thor felt her take her first step, felt the press of the sun-warmed stone against the soles of his bare foot as if it were his own sojourn.

Asphodel joins him in kneeling just as Darcy’s made it a quarter way up the path. She is bare of anything, even her ceremonial robe. Thor is not compelled to consider her though, the shape of her body or the curl of her smile. Darcy’s steps have begun to falter, the incline of the mountain growing more steep with every step. He can see it, in the slow way she’s begun to move at only a quarter up the mountain.

“She prays to you,” Asphodel comments, folding her hands over one another in her lap. “The Princess is a wild-heart. Do you answer her prayers?”

“Always.” Darcy does pray - sometimes even without any intent at all. Now though, she chants his name very quietly. He can feel it when her bare feet touch the sun-warmed stone of the steps, feel the resistance in the soles of his own feet. He can feel the tension in her calves, and the steel in her spine. “What do you make of her, Magis Diende .”

Asphodel flusters, just a little. “I am not Heir to the Magis, your highness.”

“Only because Magis has not named an heir.” The Magis was very old - like much of Asgard, she had been old when Thor was new to the realms. The Priestesses of the Nine Realms are touched by the Cosmos, and Death does not call to them like all else. The Magis will go when her sacred duty is complete. That said - Asphodel has the Calling on her. Thor can see it in her life-song. “But you will be.”

“What would suggest such a thing, your highness? The Magis only chose me for this because I too am not native to this kingdom. She thought my aliena nature would lend an empathetic essence to the Princess Darcy’s ritual. Like as not, I am not eligible to heir. I am not of here.”
Thor did turn to look at her, sufficiently appeased by the tangible weight of Darcy’s soul against his own. He looked at her upturned face, slanted cat eyes bright and curious. He looked at the spattering of freckles, too many to be especially charming, that painted her face in new constellations. He looked at her curls, dark as new-turned Earth and falling in wild profusion. He looked at her body, the clean lines and olive skin. She was made in abundance, but no so much as Darcy, nor most of the Asgardian bred women. She looked aliena, foreign, in the same way that Darcy did but also very different. She was tall, with a curve to her spine and raise to her jaw that spoke of nobility. Asphodel, from Lands Unknown, had a history Thor did not know. She was a person, with a live lived and a story and Thor was struck in a strange way by such a small thought. Asphodel was a stranger. Thor was a King.

Would be. Would be King.

With the weight of Darcy in his heart, warming his blood and soothing his soul, Thor turned. He turned himself to the Priestess Asphodel and touched her face. She trembled, so very faintly, as her dark lashes fluttered. Thor touched her mouth, with just a thumb, and found her lips to be soft, and giving. Asphodel from Lands Unknown, knelt in a Temple she was not born too, and served a Kingdom she was not bred to love.

He kissed her. Chastely. With less tongue than she’d shared with Darcy, for certain. Something curious and amused and very much not him curled up in his soul; sweet Darcy who had found some new strength to raise her feet upon the stone. Thor kissed the Priestess while he held her face in the cup of a single hand.

“We are all of the Sky,” he told her, holding her still. She seemed very small suddenly, for all that she was fire and ferocity. Asgard, suddenly, seemed very small. The throne, and the kingdom and the Nine Realms. Asphodel had a story Thor didn’t know - much like the greater part of the cosmos. Thor was small, too. Heir to the Throne, Prince on Asgard, he would be King of Kings, but who could rule the cosmos? No one man. Thor was small. “And the Sky is home to all, Magis Diende. You need not be from here, to serve the cosmos.”

“I am not the Magis Diende.”

“Not yet,” Thor argued, releasing her. He turned back to Darcy, a small pale beacon rising up the grey mountain, the New Star ascending. Darcy had a story Thor would fight to be a part of, always. “But you will be. You speak as one, already. You have the spirit of the Magis; they’ve never been known for meekness, or even particular obedience. An acolyte obeys the Magis. But the Magis speaks for the Sky, and you have done that this day. You spoke against me, in protection of the sacred precepts that are older than we Gods. I would have you as my Priestess on the Council of Nine when I take my seat upon the Throne.”
Asphodel blinked at him. “A Priestess has no place on the Council.”

“Rather stupid, that, don’t you think? My father was the God of Gods, but even he had to answer to the Higher Calling. To the All Mother, to the cosmos. And so, when I take the Throne, I will welcome you, Magis *Diende*, as the Temple Council. And I would welcome the other Realms to indoctrinate their own Acolytes to join us. Asgard will stagnate if we do not grow. Change needn’t be bad. Should we really limit the rulings of the sky to a council of only *Nine*?”

“Wise words, your majesty.”


“I am not King.”

“But you will be. You speak as one, already.” Asphodel echoed his own words with a neutral look that spoke of a suppressed smile. “This is a place of soul-travel, your highness. And yours calls to her.” Asphodel looked out beyond the veranda, where Darcy still ascended. “I could take you there.”

Ah but he would, if he could. Thor wanted nothing less. “She wishes to be alone---”

“She wishes to ascend on her own strength,” Asphodel corrected, bold and brash but Thor had already commended her for it, it would do little now to condemn her. “I would take you there on an astral plane. I believe she would appreciate the company. The Princess, I gather, is not a creature of solitude.”

“No, not hardly.”

Asphodel held out her hand, palm upward. “I will take you there,” she told him again. “I would not have her alone so needlessly. The Princess is a wildheart, but she calls to you, your Majesty. I can hear her song. It has been some time since the mountains have heard such prayer. It is beautiful, and I cannot help but be moved by it. I cannot help but answer, too. I am only a Priestess, but this...this I can do.”

“*She* is beautiful,” Thor breathed out, letting his hand slip into Asphodels. He felt the shiver of something old, something beyond the ken of Gods, reach out unto his tangled heart.

Asphodel agreed with little but a nod and Thor felt himself be pulled ever gently from the physical
planes of Asgard. “She is,” Asphodel said, as the ground shimmered beneath them. “She has a temple heart.”
Asphodel leaves Thor at Darcy’s side, on the smooth, worn steps of the mountain.

“I thought it would be colder,” Darcy mentions, absently. She doesn’t look at him, but Thor can feel the way her light reaches to his, a calling of their hearts who know one another. She knows he’s there. Maybe it’s the magic of the mountain, maybe it’s her, but she knows.

“Asgard has three suns,” Thor explains, strangely displaced. His feet don’t quite touch the ground as he walks, as if there is a disconnect between his body and soul. “It is always warm, here.”

“Are you really here?” Her steps pause, and she turns to him - in the direction of him at least, brown drawn together. “I can’t see you, but I know you’re here. But then, I guess...it’s always that way, kind of. I can always feel you.”

“I’d follow you to the end of the world, a mountain top is nothing,” Thor says, brave on the astral plane. “I’d follow you into the sea, into the stars, and though I hope it’s your life that I should follow, I’d hold your hand unto death just as well.” Time would not stop him, nothing so simple, as following her and the blossoms of hope and heart that sprouted in her every footstep; the families she grew, the light she burned, the love she sowed. “C’mon, love. Not so much farther, now.”

“I’m scared,” Darcy admits, lashes fluttering. The mist of the mountains glitters and twists at her feet. “It scares me.”

“The Temple is a place for Gods to greet their children,” Thor assures her, and though he does not think she can hear him, he knows she understands the sentiment by the way her shoulders ease. “There is nothing to fear here.”

“I’m not sure I’m ready to learn what the Temple is going to teach me about myself,” Darcy says and it’s...it’s profound in a simple way, the nature of the Temple realized in an essence Thor had never considered. Those some few Gods that do bless the Children who come to the Temple - it is telling.
The Righteous, the Bold, The Clever, The Kind, but the Wicked, and The Tempestuous and The Fury too. Not all Gods came graciously, or even particularly kind. Such was the balance, after all. Such was life. Never so simple as good versus evil, nothing so undemanding. Thor supposed it was a blessing he was given gifts that leant him to do good.

“No,” Darcy shook her head, tumbling curls around her face in the gentle, sweet wind. “The gifts don’t lend themselves to goodness. You do. You’re a War God, Thor. You think that’s something inherently good?”

“I’m not,” Thor denied, stunning even himself. He had prided himself for so long in the prowess of his form, of his fight. The fire in his blood, the power. And it seemed so futile now, where he stood on the very mountain that bestowed such gifts. Thor felt as if, perhaps, he wasted them. “That is to say - not really. I never was meant for war and my gifts don’t lend themselves to such. Fertility, strength? Before it was lightning - it was but water. Rain. It was life. I was meant to be a God of Life, perhaps, but there is no such thing. We are all Gods of the living, none of us of Life.”

“Your Spring Mother,” Darcy reasoned.

“Ah but she is no Goddess. The Mother is the Higher Calling, who grants us these gifts. She is no Goddess. She is...Mitéra, Mor, Majka,Moeder. Mother. A million, billion galaxies, swimming with stars. But if we are the stars, she is the space between them. She is All. She is life.” He stops, feeling emboldened and strange outside his body and caught up in the sweet magic of the mountain, and of Her. “It is why we call her mother, for nothing else could make us as we are. We were born a people, from the cosmos womb, and it was she who made us.”

“Just because there wasn’t a life God before...” Darcy takes another step, never wavering. “You could be the first.”

“It is to late for me I think, but I’m not so unhappy with my lot in life. I fear perhaps I could have been more, but it is no reason to be less.” Like his father, Thor would be known as a War God and such things brought no shame...only a shadow on his heart.

Darcy laughs, and the sound chased the darkness from him. “You’re younger than me.”

“Perhaps,” he agrees, with a mock scowl. “Never mind it, Princess. Today is your day among the temple. I’ll not have my navel gazing cast a gloom.”
When at last, Darcy does make her way to the top, the Keepers wait. They are Timeless, but not Ageless, and they move as slow as the planets turn, creeping forward with crape-paper hands, their skin as fine and thin as gossamer. Their eyes are white, and speckled with constellations that tell the tales of the Gods. Thor has met them only once before, upon his own Ascension.

“The New Star comes and she leads the King,” Tid, the middlest of the Keepers rasps, with a voice that sounds like ice caps scraping a frozen shore. “Pretty babe.”

Død, who was middle born last, though it was hard to tell by the look of her, smiled serenely. The years had sapped any color from her, leaving her but a rainbow of fading grays. “Fresh born to the youngest of the Realms. New Star, do you know your path?”

“I follow Thor,” Darcy tells them, softly but with no hesitance. Thor feels himself flicker brightly with the truth of it, with the whole of her soul sewn right to his. “That is my path.”

Liv, oldest among the mountain keepers, hummed. “The boy follows you, dear.”

“He followed you here,” Død agreed, with a wrinkled frown. “Since you’ve come to Asgard, not once have you followed him. Thor walks a path you have set, Child of Terr.”

“Earth,” Tid translated, slipping between her sisters to touch Darcy’s face. “She has yet to be grown, this planet yours. She is young, and so are you. Youngness is a fate only time can save you from. I am Tid, do you know what that means?”


“Bit out of order, darling.” Liv laughed. “Life, then Time and then Death. That is the way of things. But we would all tell you otherwise, and claim ourselves above the others.”

“Time is deathless,” Tid agreed. “It cannot die.”

“And Death, timeless, as it is like to be an end as it is a beginning,” Død said, rolling her pale eyes. She looked at Thor with a curious glint. “Death is lifeless, and life is but the first ticking of the clock.”
“Time is the only God we know. On every hour passing, we sing it’s prayers,” Darcy murmurs, eyes drifting close. Thor wanted to push away the Keepers hand, and break the precious spell. But no - these were the Mountains and he would not sully the magic here.

“Where did you hear that, Child?” Tid asks, letting Darcy go.

Darcy shook herself a little, and Thor moved closer into her space. She was warm though, and pink with pleasure. The Mountains were good, and the Keepers kind. Their touch was a blessing all it’s own. “I think I read it in a book once.”

“Hasn’t been written yet,” Tid laughs. “After this one perhaps, the author has many stories to tell.”

Blinking her blue eyes open, Darcy sways and frowns. “I don’t understand. I’m certain I---”

“It’s the magic of the mountain, my girl. Perhaps you read it in another life, in the future. Do not be concerned. You have come to the Temple to present yourself to the Gods. Are you ready?”

Darcy turns and looks at him, catches his gaze as if she can truly see him and Thor is almost frightened by the intensity he finds in her sea-storm iris, the heat there, the promise. “I am.”

***

The Temple is built into a cave at the crest of the hill, lit with candles the Keepers keep alight. Darcy stands before the high, carved arch of the caves mouth and stares deep into the flickering darkness.

“You’ll stay with me,” she asks, and Thor touches her, touches her soul. She doesn’t need his answer, and steps forward before he speaks. She trusts him.

Even the temple is warm, like spring afternoons are warm. Every candle casts a new shadow in a different direction and they stretch long and lean up the walls and across the ceiling. Darcy walks through the mouth of the cave and into the temple.

“I’m scared of the dark.”
“Go where your feet carry you,” Thor tells her, matching her short stride. She’s so small, swallowed up by his shadow and it’s frightening, it’s terrible to think he could ever eclipse her. “Close your eyes, and simply follow in whatever direction pulls you.”

And so she goes, and where she passes, the candles flicker and gutter and come to a hissing quiet. Darcy, having listened to Thor, doesn’t know that the darkness has come to eat up the flickering light and so she walks fearlessly on. Thor though - Thor is frightened.

The Temple is a maze, every path leading back into itself and Darcy walks and walks and walks, darkness nipping at her heels. Thor stays with her, as the rising call of the cosmos hums in his ears. Her fingers twitch at her sides, but she never stops. Thor remembers, from his own venture, how the Gods and Goddesses had sang in his ears and he wonders now - do they sing to her?

They twist the paths, crossing dark places their feet have already been but Darcy doesn’t know and Thor does not tell her. She walks in circles, in squares and lines until every single candle has hissed itself silent and dark. She passes every God and Goddess Thor knows, and a great many he doesn’t, their little plinths built into the wall holding snuffed candles. None seem to call her, and none remain aglow. They pass Thor’s and even Loki’s, but Darcy is not called to pause. She walks and walks and walks and when she stops, Thor is so startled, he steps right into her.

“Thor?”

“It’s okay,” Thor murmurs, careful to be quiet for no reason other than the darkness calls for it. “We’ve reached the Temple’s heart. Open your eyes, Darcy. All the Gods will see you now.”

Chapter End Notes

that bit about time being the only gods we know is from a book I'm just...I've been writing for years haha.

straight up, I cut this off where I did because last time you were all GIVE US THE TEMPLE ALREADY

BAHAHAH.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

“I am Thor of the Stars, first of my name,” he told her and felt the patriarchal tether crash inside him, the bond forged by his father's name shattered like earthly glass. “And I serve the Cosmos as my lady bids me.”

Chapter Notes

Guys. I've missed you and I am so genuinely sorry about the lack of quality updates lately.

In truth - I have a hard time ending stories. As soon as that light is in sight, I freeze up. Some of you may recall similar lags when I wrote Old Dogs. I don't know what happens - I get melancholy and shy away. I don't want things to end, but I don't want to drag them into the dirt. So I am sorry, but I haven't abandoned you. Many of you were disappointed with the last chapter, and I hope that this makes up for it. It's not terribly long, just under 3k...but it took me a full month to be happy with, and I am. I am so happy how I finally brought this moment to light because this...this is what we've been waiting for.

Bless!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

On the walls of the Temple’s heart, there are runes carved as each new God or Goddess is born. Thor’s name is among them, a line and a point - a symbol for strength. There are more symbols than Thor could ever number, or even recall. Old and young, gone and here - all the children of the Mother were recalled therein upon the ancient mountain walls. A proud many had shone brightly when Thor had discovered the Temple’s heart - the Gods and Goddess who sought to bless him.

Thor watches Darcy’s face as her lashes fluttered open. With Thor at her side, together they watched as every ruin began to glow, thrumming with a rising brightness that ignited the cave in a brilliant, glittering light.

But when next he blinks - he’s in the salon again, bare but for a cold sweat clinging to his skin. “Darcy,” he gasps, floundering to his feet. “I must---I must go to her. I must---”
“Thor?” It’s Loki who grasps his arm, the face of their father pinched in genuine concern. “What is it? What have you seen?”

“The priestess - she took me to Darcy on the astral plane, and I ascended the mountain on her side. When we reached the temple - no Gods called to her.”

“Surely not,” Loki snaps his fingers at a young acolyte, who brings them watered wine. “She’d have felt your song, at least.”

“And yours, for all that I know her,” Thor drinks deeply from the pale, porcelain chalice, hands trembling like a fine but furious quake. An anxious palsy. “But none, not mine or any other. We walked all the halls, and never did she waver at one alter or another. None called to her, but when we came to the Temples Heart...”

“You claim the runes were not alight for her? At least yours, Thor. You have chosen her already. Any and all can feel the bond between you, of God and Acolyte, as well as all else.” Loki looks down into his own cup for a brief instant, before generously returning it over to Thor. “Another.”

Another indeed. Thor drank it down with aught but a gasp, hand quivering as he wiped the remains from his mouth with the back of his hand. A wisp of a priestess came to collect both, gone as quickly as she came. “They were all alight, everyone. Have you ever heard of such a thing?”

“Not at all,” Loki admits, quite clearly astounded. “How can none have called to her, but all runes vwoke at her presence? Perhaps the Archivist will know, or the---”

“They wake for her because she calls to them,” the Magis cuts in between them. “Their song will not carry over the whisper of her own. The New Star cometh, and she awaits you in the field of Asphodels.”

“There is no field of Asphodels here.” Loki frowns, the old, silver-streaked beard of their father pulling down at the corners. “Magis, I know of no such place. Nor of any mortal calling to the Gods.”

“The field is new,” the Magis reveals, tipping her old head lightly. The white of her hair seemed especially snowy like this latest jaunt had snatched what little youth she had left of her. Thro grew anxious. “And King mine, you have heard of such a tale. For the Mother croons a song that we all Gods surrender to.”
“You speak of the life song.” Thor turns to the mountain, a dark ragged blade that cut the sweet, maze sky. “Darcy cannot hear it but I have seen her call to the life in others. Is it so, here?”

“No,” the Magis said, with a serene smile. “Nothing so affected. She anticipates you, Prince mine. You must go to her. You must fly.”

“I haven't my hammer.” And he lamented the fact, truly. “I cannot fly.”

The Magis laughed and waved her hand toward the rocky outcrop overlooking the valley below. “The Princess said you would say as much, and bid that we tell you to ‘all things equal, trust me, you can fly’. This means something to you?”

“Am I to simply pitch myself off the terrace and hope for the best that I don’t dash myself against the rocks as I tumble straight to the valley?” All things equal, he would have too. How many times had he asked Darcy to trust him just so blindly? He would do her a disservice, and tarnish his own faith.

“That would be the most direct method,” the Magis agrees. “The Field of Asphodels is below.”

“Hardly the most eloquent means of transport,” Thor argues, mildly, as the priestess lead him back to the veranda. Across the horizon, the sun sat low, kissing the verdant fields that stretched the lands outside the city proper. “How long was the Accent?” The sun seems strangely placed, for the handful of hours Thor spent at Darcy’s side. “Twilight is upon us.”

Loki stands at his side, wearing fathers frown. “Not hardly. Thor - the Suns are rising. A day has come and went. We weathered here at the Temple awaiting your ladies return.”

“No,” Thor says stupidly, looking between the Suns and his brother. “No, no. I was gone but a few hours. Darcy and I had just reached the temple. Certainly, the criers can confirm the time. You had a sentry posted to track her progress up the mountain. It must be—”

“Thor.” Loki laid both hands over Thor's shoulders, where they stood on the veranda in nothing but gauzy shifts and morning light. “The Lady met the Temple Doors yesterday afternoon. But now - the suns rise. It is a new day. If what you say is true - the Princess—“
“She’s alone,” Thor hurried to finish, fingers clenching where they curled over the stone-carved ledge. “She’s been alone all night. And she has not begun the descent. She must be afraid.” She’d looked to him with those big, blue eyes of her, and she was afraid. He thrust away from the ledge, glancing madly about the room, for some way to go to her. She needed him. “I must---I must go to her. I need too---”

“Do you trust her?” Loki challenges, grabbing Thor by the arm. “If you tell me she is fit to serve the council and fit to sit your mothers’ throne --- Thor, you must trust her.”

Thor stops, staring down at his brother. He can see Loki so clearly now, behind the mask of their father. He’s amazed he ever saw anything else. “My death would serve a great convenience for you, don’t think I’m unaware.”

“Your blood is all that remains to carry our name,” Loki said, with Odin’s dominion but none of his steel. “Your life is all I have left to this world.”

“So you say, Father.” Thor turned from Loki, lest his face betray him for the truth there. “But never did I think you’d champion the vagary of some Midgardian girl.”

Loki’s face did not twist in any way - not Odin’s or his own. It remained, instead, painfully earnest. “She’s no Midgardian girl. She’s your Queen. And if I am expected to relieve the council of my kingdom to you, and her, I would ask that your faith in her does not waver. In all things, perfect confidence. This is no exception, fretful though it is. Your faith must remain.”

“I do not waver.” Never that, not for Darcy. “I have knelt at her Temple and begged atonement. I have taken wine from her lips, and pleasure in her body. I am hers, and she is mine. My belief for Darcy knows no depths, but my belief in myself is another matter. I believe she believes that I can do this, but I am not so sure.”

“A King and Queen rule side by side. Where one can not choose, the other shall. If you are not so sure - let your Princess be certain for you.” Loki squeezed his shoulder and Thor wished, as he had time and again, that he could tell Loki he knew. That he could have his brother, even in the privacy of their own minds. But so long that Loki did not know Thor knew the truth, he would behave at his finest. “If she’s never lied to you before, my son - why would she now?”

***

A new scent had stolen the breeze, where it tugged at the braids in his tangled hair. Flowers. The Council and the Following looked on from the doors of the terrace, quiet tittering all but lost to the
wind. Thor stood on the stone carved railing and looked to the wispy clouds, cobwebbed across a silvery sky. The valley below was awash in pale purple, an endless field of newborn petals and Thor knew them in his heart, from a dream washed memory.

“Mother hear me,” he begs, quiet and unto himself. “Grant me wings that I might find my love.”

No wings came to him, but the wind pulled him harder, and Thor thought of sweet Darcy and stepped from the ledge, eyes wide open.

And he flew.

Hand outstretched, it felt no different than flying with his hammer. He roars aloud, pushing faster, static catching across his fingertips and the valley grew closer and brighter.

And she was there, in her gauzy shift, smiling at him with a new light in her eyes. Behind him, the city had begun to sing, the Eirial Hymn, a Mothertonge Prayer.

_Fierce is the God whose hands are bare_  
_One flame lights a thousand fires_  
_Strong is the God who hears the prayer_  
_Those who kneel, ye apostle choir_  
_Wise is the God, whose knows the fall_  
_When a single ripple be only the start_  
_Great is the God who heeds the call_  
_The beating of a Temple Heart_

The dream returned to him, in a spiral of fractured moments. A field of pale purple, set at the foot of a great black mountain and stretched across a leaden sky.

“What is this place,” he asked Darcy, as she sat cross-legged braiding chains of pale blooms. Even as he asked, he knew.

The sweetly perfumed breeze tugged at her filmy robe and the shape of her bare body was familiar now, and clear. Rising, Darcy held aloft her flower crown, in both pale hands and smiled with a peek of gapped teeth. Thor knelt, feeling the weight of such a thing descend deep in his bones. With
delicate fingers, she crowned him in Asphodels. He did not rise, weighted in place instead, but the serenity at the moment. Green was the grass, purple the flower, and grey the sky, but Darcy was a color not yet named.

“I’ve waited a very long time for you, Thor Odinson, Prince to the Throne of Asgard, God of Lightning, God of Fertility, God of Strength, and Hero of the Midgard,” Darcy told him, cupping his cheek. She lifted his gaze to meet her own, and she was so small now, that even as he knelt and she stood, they were of a height. When he looked into her eyes - that familiar abysmal storm - what he found there stole his breath.

“All-Mother.”

“You prayed for wings, but you did not need them,” the All-Mother told him, as she held his cheek and gaze alike.

It is a singularly peculiar thing to be a God, raised among Gods, strong and powerful and long-enduring----and find oneself before the creator. She, no goddess, but the Mother of All. And to stand before her and wonder after, very desperately, his Princess.

“She is well,” the All-Mother laughed, smiling more widely than Darcy would have. “She is very well. I was beginning to think she might not ever be born, but only a moment ago, I felt her star rise. A moment for me, mind you - but she is young, isn’t she?”

“We all are, at one point or another,” Thor replied, rather absurdly. “I am---humbled, though I don’t understand and I would ask---I would ask---” How did one make such charges of the Mother of All? “Please, I would have her back.”

“And so shall you,” she assured him again. “You have grown, under her light. A proper God, you are. And of the Three, have you made your choice?”

“Fertility,” Thor said at once, startling even himself. “I---I---Yes. If I must choose of your gifts, then I shall choose Fertility.”

“As I thought you would.” She breathed out and the world came to life with it, butterflies and bees sparkling into existence around them. “But I do not mean to ask such of you. What I ask, is far more grave. You are Thor, next in line to the Throne of Kings, and you are Thor, Hero to the Nine Realms and Protector of Earth, and you are Thor, God under the Spring Star of lightning, fertility, and strength. How will you choose?”

How oft had he sat and considered such paths? How oft had he drowned himself in melancholy, wondering at the worth in each? Once upon a time, if asked, he could not choose where his heart lay - Midgard or Asgard, but now? His heart lay in the hands of another and home was where she be. Earth did not need him, safe in the hands of his Avenger brethren. Asgard did not need him, held fast in the hands of his brother.

He was no hero and no King, but a heart did flutter beneath his own, an apostle calling. Thor Odinson was, here and now and forever more, a God above all else. And he knew what she asked, and he knew his answer with the whole of his heart.

“I am Thor of the Stars, first of my name,” he told her and felt the patriotic tether crash inside him, the bond forged by his father's name shattered like Earthly glass. “And I serve the Cosmos as my lady bids me.”
“I always knew you would. Oh, I watched you toil and despair and there for a moment, I thought perhaps you’d misvalued yourself. I love all my children, as any mother does - but you...Son of Spring, first of your kind. I had bigger things than war and blood for you.”

“I despair that I did not understand the merits of all your gifts sooner. I’m afraid it took the Lady Darcy for me to truly appreciate them.”

“I am glad to hear it. I have waited so very long for you to find her.” She sighed, gusty and sweet. “I suppose that is the essence of this, isn’t it? I am not young, Son of Spring. I am the mother of Time. And I am not your lady.” She laughed when he moved to protest. She was the All-Mother, the space between the Stars. “I am not young, Son of Spring. And I thank you that I might be reborn.”

Fear gripped his heart, but the Mother would do no harm. “I do not understand.”

“Thor of the Stars, first of your name - you were born to be a King, but you knelt for a girl and pleaded atonement. You sought penance and made amends on an altar in a carnal way. I heard those prayers, spoken to your Lady, and I answered. Do you recall?”

“I do.” How could he not? Such was the first time he laid with Darcy. Power had come unto him, and he’d awoken changed within and out.

“I watched you love her,” Darcy told him, in the Old Tongue. “And you crowned her and called her your equal. This girl, this mortal girl younger than a winds wisp and nothing at all in any grand scheme. You raised her up.”

“She raised me up,” Thor protested, righteous truth burning white hot in his core.

“She did.” The All-Mother cupped his face in both hands. “She did. She was beautiful and she was kind and she believed in you when you did not believe in yourself. Her faith lit a thousand fires, and together- on the altar of old Oak, she said my prayer and you gave her to me.”

‘I am the acorn in the grass, who would grow at your command,’ Darcy demanded, with an impertinent grin. “Guide me, and grow me, King of Kings.”

On the Spring Solstice, he had taken Darcy in the name of the All-Mother. So he had - yes, he had. Central Park, the Ambassadors Ball. The Søkeren. “So I did.”

“Through you, I found her,” the All-Mother continued. “And you brought her here, and to the temples where the Gods woke to my song and it was then that I knew. Son of Spring, you were born under my sign for a reason. You were born to the stars, that you might bring her to me. Son of Spring - King to the Stars, I would rest now and leave this all to her. And her, I leave to you.”

---

Chapter End Notes

i fixed all the 'ruins' to 'runes'
The returning sojourn to the Salon at the Temples is a quiet one. Darcy is not quite Darcy yet, Thor can see the starbursts in her eyes. She swans down the stairs, toes barely brushing the stone steps. Thor is...frightened. He wants to touch her, but already her fragile body is holding the seed in which all life grew, and so Thor is frightened that even the barest fingertip might bruise, or burst her.

She does not speak, and so Thor maintains the silence. When at last the reach the Solan at the Temple, the congregation is waiting. Darcy has shed her filmy gauze robe, and as she approaches them, her chin is raised and her hair catches the wind.

“Asgardians,” she calls, in the Olde Tongue, flawless on the mouth that first spoke it. “My oldest children.”

It is a strange thing, to know a thing and to hear it spoken as truth. The congregation bursts into a flutter, but the Priestess all kneel, their robes in puddles around them. They will greet their Mother as all Children do, in naught but the skin she did bless them with.

Thor remains at her side, conscious of the power radiating in rhythmic bursts to match her mortal heart. Loki is the first of the congregation to kneel and Thor...Thor is not surprised. The others take suit - their King has knelt. Darcy comes to him first and touches his face. “Ah, my wayward son. You have been wronged.”

“If I have, I have wronged two-fold in return,” Loki tells her, the gravity of his voice and the solemnity of his expression particularly ripened by the age of Odin’s face. “And so I shall atone four-times over. As your balance demands, Mother.”

There is a hiss, collective and sharp. All Mother. None dare speaks against such a proclamation, not from their King. They can feel it, Thor thinks - as a child of Asgard feels the tethers of their Creator.

“True,” the All-Mother agrees, letting her hand slip from his jaw. “These are your people, your Council of Nine, who speak for their Realms?”

“Aye, my lady,” the representative from Vanheim spoke. “Princessa spoke on behalf of Midgard. Shall we appoint another in her stead?”
“No need, Nymoria.” The All-Mother smiles prettily, Darcy’s gap on wide display. Such a strange and private thing, Darcy’s smile and Thor feels his palms ache for the tightness of his fists. This is not quite Darcy. “My time among this plane is limited. Before I leave my light to the Princessa, I would first rectify the gross injustice made against me, in the name of your King, Odin. He who would call himself the All-Father, he who was not satisfied with the fruits I would gift him. Hmm.” She turns to Loki again and kneels before him. This time, she takes his face in both hands and Thor watches Loki tremble like a caught dove. “I who knows the heart of you, who breathed you into life - I say this; you have paid for your sins two-fold. As I say it is so, who would object?”

Not a voice is raised, and Thor holds his breath.

“I breathed you into life, my son. And I placed you on a path. This was not it,” the All-Mother tells Loki, with wide, blue eyes and soft, pale hands. “This was not it. I cannot return it as it was, not without taking from you what you’ve learned... and what you’ve learned will be of great use to you, King to Asgard, of the new Branch of Odinson, Friggason - and Thor of the Stars.” Darcy turned to the congregation, and when she spoke - Thor did not hear her words, nor were they said in any language he knew Darcy to speak. He felt them, as all her children would. “I will unmake this man, and before you will stand your new King, reborn. And all past deeds done by him will be cleansed, and his debt of sins will be paid by my light. Who says this is not so?”

No one - not a single soul across Asgard, not a single soul in the Nine Realms, he and she who believed and could hear.

“I unmake you, Loki Odinson,” Darcy whispered, but it cracked like a lightning over the sky. There is no gasp, no such thing, for every breath is held in tight confusion. There is only silence now, as the light of a new life is born before them. “As I freed your brother from the binds of his father I free you of the same. Loki of the Stars - first King of his name. I free you of your sins and I return to you that which has been stolen.”

Even as Thor watches - as they wall watch - the facade of Odin is melted away and Loki is left kneeling before the All-Mother, caught in her borrowed hands. “My atonement is not finished. It shall never be finished. I would serve---”

“Serve as I bid you,” the All-Mother interrupts. “Asgard is in need of a great King, and I have named you.”

“Thor---”

“Thor was not made to be King,” she told him gently, and Thor feels it in his heart - a new and
frightening path, lit with wonder and the unknown. “Thor is to be a God. But Asgard needs a king, as do the Nine Realms, where live the oldest and the youngest of my children. Will you serve me, Loki of the Stars, and take the throne as the New King of Asgard.”

“I am unworthy—”

“How long have you worn your father’s face, Loki?” Secriel from Álfheimr asked, great, luminous eyes white as new snow. “The Weavers did not speak it. The Dreamers did not speak it. How long, Son of the Stars, have you sat the throne?”

When Loki did not speak, Thor clears his throat. “He took Odin’s face when Mother passed. Father fell into the all sleep and did not wake. He died…” Thor swallowed. “The eve of my latest return - Odin returned to Valhalla. I felt it, as I felt the loss of my Mother.”

Doriel of Vanaheim sighed, airy and light as the Vanaheim people did all things. “The Dreamers saw many paths - but they could not see the Second Son of Odin. We did wonder.”

The Niðavellir Dwarf Lord raised his fist. “So it was Loki who brokered treaties across the realms, and brought to fruition the first real peace these stars have seen since the birth of Thor?”

“It is so,” Thor said firmly. “Upon Father’s falling to the Long Sleep, Loki has protected this realm. He took upon himself the Mantel of King not in an act of selfishness like one might expect… but because Asgard without a King is ripe for violence. He took the face of our father expecting never to be free of it. His crimes are great - but since then, he has served you well, each and all of you. Who would say otherwise?”

“We do not speak against the All-Mother,” Secriel did not ask for the approval of the council but was met with a murmur of assent all the same.

“I fear I cannot be your king,” Loki started, not at Thor or Darcy or the people of Asgard, but at the ground instead. “I cannot.”

“You already are.” Thor felt choked - too much in too little time and he could not fully comprehend the magnitude, outside the new, soothing weight where it settled in his bones. “As our Lady commands.”
“Odin was a liar,” Darcy said, very plainly and very calmly. “Odin was a liar, and a warmonger and a man who built his fortune in great seas of blood. Beautiful Asgard, peaceful Asgard - it was not always so. Odin was a terrible man, but upon him came a time when the light did not shine and he chose instead a different path. Your father was old when his heart changed, and he sewed great generations of peace and prosperity. You are young, Loki of the Stars, and I would see what greatness you might do. Be free of your father, and his sins. Be free of your own.” And with a smile that did not belong on her face, Darcy touched Loki’s face. “And should you feel the desire to stray, should the allure of deceit, of trickery sink its merry claws too deep---- I give you this.”

Below them, the ground cracked, opening to reveal a gaping maw, a chasm of darkness so deep and vast, Thor had only ever seen such a black in the cosmos.

It was a woman - older than he, with hair the color of a raven’s wings and eyes as green as the valley grass. She crackled with rage, and a frightening power and Thor sucked in a breath, lightning collecting at his fingertips.

“Hela,” Loki whispered, with his own raven hair, and the green of his eyes bright with hurt. “Oh, Mother - It’s Hela .”

Hela. Hela who had been but a pale babe, with wispy dark curls and a bell-chime laugh. Hela - who Odin had ----

What had Odin done?

“The Goddess of Death,” Darcy murmured, as Hela raged behind a veil of white flame not even she could break. “He took her and cast her to the past. He raised her as his own, and conquered the sky. And when she grew too great - when she grew too strong... He banished her to the Underworld.” Darcy sighed, looking very much like Thor’s own mother. Loving, and kind, and exhausted by her own progeny. “And many thousands of years later, he found a pale babe, with eyes the color of New Spring and he hoped very much it was a chance at redemption. And he raised the boy as his own son, and he loved him, but he feared him. And when Loki came to him with a daughter, pale babe with green eyes - Odin could not face his fears. He cast her back again.”

She was beautiful, and she was old, with the chaos that tasted familiar in the air. This was Loki’s daughter , who he had been born unto himself, and he loved her so very much. Thor remembered. Thor remembered .

“Hela of the Stars. Goddess of Death.” She stepped through the white flame and robbed Thor of any remaining calm. But no - this was not Darcy. This was the Mother - the Maker and the Unmaker -
and when Hela reached for her in anger, Hela was no more.

The flames faded, leaving in their wake only a gentle saffron-scented mist. In the All Mothers arms was a babe, with a skin of ivory and hair of jet and the greenest eyes Thor should ever see. “Hela,” she said, as she pressed the girl into Loki’s arms. “Every King needs an heir.

“Loki has many children,” Thor found himself saying, as memories of eight-legged horses and great terrible snakes filled his mind. “Fenrir.”

With a nod, Darcy snapped her fingers and across the kingdom, a howl could be heard. “Fenrir.” She turned to Darcy once more. “You remember the others now.”

Holding Hela, with the moon in his eyes, Loki looked wild and frightened. “Slepnir. Jörmungandr. Nǫrðri.” He breathed deeply and held Hela closer. “There are many.”

“If only every King were so fruitful.” Darcy slipped her hand into Thor’s. “And as you believed in the fire of your brother - all of your children came unto you wanted. That they were taken is a debt I will pay on behalf of your father. Your children are returned, Loki of the Stars. These are the future Kings and Queens of Asgard.”

“No,” Loki choked. “No, I would...I would ask that the All-Mother not be so kind in her generosity. Please. If I am truly to be cleansed of my sins - may my children never see the Throne.”

“And would you punish your children for your own mistakes,” a Councilman asked, frowning. “Who are we to naysay the mother---”

“There is a darkness in him that hungers for power and only fear staves the edge of its teeth from biting,” Thor cut him off, shaking his head and holding his brothers gaze. So strange to see his face without the layers of magic. Loki looked so terribly young. Did Thor look the same? He could see the fear written there, and so he spoke it when his brother could not. “His children will not know fear, but they must also know no power.”

“One of ours,” Darcy said.

Darcy.
“One of ours?” It was her. It was her, Thor could feel it. He could feel it in the tremble of her jaw as he moved to cup her face. “A grave thing, Princess.”

“All things taken must be replaced,” she said, very faintly, the All Mothers confidence a shaky whisper on her lips. “I take you, and I return your child to the throne. So like - this seems right.”

Turning in Thor’s delicate hold, Darcy addressed the scattered, naked council. “Does the Council stand this?”

“Aye,” they said, one and another and all at once.

“Cool. Cool, cool, cool,” Darcy muttered, rocking on her heels. She was mother-bare, but for the flowers in her hair and she looked especially beautiful, especially bright, with all of humanity born of her womb. “But like - now what?”

"Now we return to the castle," Thor declared, unease growing in his bones. Something was alive in her - the first Star in the sky. And Thor wanted nothing but to have her alone and be sure of her self. On the horizon, the sky was a sea of bleeding grey. The shields of Asgard crackled above them, in violent bursts of acid white. The forcefields were alight. "King Loki," Thor turned to his brother. "What are your commands?"

"Something is coming," Loki spoke, very plainly and with the calm of a storms eye. It carried across the kingdom, a solemn command. "We must prepare ourselves." When he turned back to Thor, his voice was his alone again. "Return to the castle. In the morning, the council shall gather once more."

End Notes

I wrote this song long ago and it was very much the inspiration for this.

let me be your jealous god
And you be my disciple
worship no other before me
and let me be your idol
i can be your temple
And you can come inside me
on your knees, blessed be
Singing my praise nightly

Spare me all religion
Save the one between your thighs
And summon my holy spirit
On your breathless broken cries

I can be your jealous god
And you can sacrifice
Blood and body, water and wine
And any other vice

Works inspired by this one

Blood and Water by Molly Jae, The Praying Girl by microwave

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!